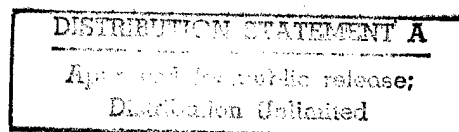


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No. 1813

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No. 6, June 1983

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USSR REPORT MILITARY AFFAIRS

No. 1813

MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

No. 6, June 1983

Except where indicated otherwise in the table of contents the following is a complete translation of the Russian language monthly journal VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL.

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INCREASED MILITARY, POLITICAL VIGILANCE URGED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 83 (signed to press 24 May 83) pp 3-11

[Article by Col Gen A. Lizichev, member of the military council and chief of the Political Directorate of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany: "V. I. Lenin and the CPSU on the Need to Increase Vigilance"]

[Text] In Lenin's theoretical heritage a significant place is held by the questions of revolutionary vigilance against the class enemies and the intrigues of imperialism. V. I. Lenin cautioned us to strictly keep military and state secrets and to always be on guard. The party's leader also gave particular attention to vigilance in military affairs. In combating the enemy, he pointed out, "it is essential to have military discipline and military vigilance brought to the highest limits."¹

Lenin's legacy on vigilance has underlaid the work of the Communist Party with the Army and Navy personnel in the course of creating and improving the Armed Forces. Under present-day conditions of the international situation, these have assumed particular significance. The aggressive imperialist circles headed by the United States have declared a new "crusade" against real socialism. The United States and NATO are conducting an unprecedented arms race calculating on achieving military supremacy over the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. They have initiated a broad political, economic and ideological offensive against the USSR, the countries of the socialist commonwealth and the peace-loving forces of the world. The CPSU, in relying on Lenin's theoretical heritage, under the conditions of the fierce offensive by the aggressive forces, teaches the Soviet people and their armed defenders to correctly understand the political situation, to spot the enemy's intrigues, to counter its subversive activities and any ideological subversion, to decisively unmask fabrications and provocative rumors and preserve state and military secrets.

In carrying out the decisions of the 26th CPSU Congress, our party is consistently and purposefully conducting a peace-loving foreign policy aimed at checking the arms race and preventing a nuclear catastrophe. This can be seen also from the decisions of the November (1982) Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee and from the new peace initiatives which were made by the Warsaw Pact states at the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in Prague in January 1983. The loyalty of the CPSU to the cause of peace is fused together with a constant concern for defending the victories of socialism and for raising the vigilance

and combat readiness of the Soviet Armed Forces. "We are well aware," said the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Comrade Yu. V. Andropov, at the November (1982) Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, "that peace cannot be asked from the imperialists. It must be defended, relying solely on the invincible might of the Soviet Armed Forces."²

The necessity of high political vigilance against the intrigues of the forces of imperialism, reaction and war has existed over the entire history of our socialist state. We view the concept of "vigilance" through the prism of the class interests of the socialist state, as an expression of the unflagging attention of the Communist Party, the Soviet state, the masses of people, the Armed Forces, groups of people and individuals to their enemies.

Revolutionary, political vigilance is one of the conditions for the successful class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie which is ready to resort to any "savagery, brutality and crimes in order to defend rotten capitalist slavery."³ Vigilance is a means for defending the interests of the working class and the workers of the socialist state. It is based upon communist ideological loyalty, high patriotism and love for the fatherland and for the commonwealth of socialist states as well as on an awareness of international duty.

It is important that high vigilance be manifested both in international relations and in solving domestic questions. This Leninist statement was proclaimed at the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets which adopted the appeal written by the revolution's leader and in which he demanded that the workers strengthen vigilance in the struggle against the forces of international imperialism and internal counterrevolution. At the moment of the greatest danger for the Soviet republic by the imperialists and internal counterrevolution, V. I. Lenin sent letters to the party and soviet organizations and appeals addressed to the broadest strata of workers and peasants on this important question.

The works of V. I. Lenin "The Socialist Fatherland in Danger!" "Everyone into the Struggle Against Denikin!" "A Letter to Workers and Peasants on the Occasion of the Victory Over Kolchak," "Beware of Spies!" and others are full of the demand to observe vigilance. V. I. Lenin viewed the giving away of a party, state or military secret as a severe crime against the motherland and as aiding the enemy. V. I. Lenin taught that to be on guard means to protect the armed forces like the apple of your eye and increase their combat readiness. He linked vigilance with the development among the Army and Navy men of a political awareness, a sense of the acuteness of all forms of worker class struggle and to the ability to identify the perfidious methods and stratagems employed by the enemies in the struggle against socialism.

The foresightedness of Lenin and the ability to thoroughly analyze the enemy's conduct made it possible for the Communist Party and the Soviet government to thwart the aggressive plans of imperialism during the Civil War years.

During the period of peaceful socialist construction, V. I. Lenin repeatedly reminded that the Soviet republic was surrounded by enemies. "...He who forgets the danger constantly threatening us," he wrote, "and which will not cease

as long as world imperialism exists, the person who forgets this forgets our labor republic."⁴ The party indoctrinated the people and the Armed Forces in a spirit of Lenin's legacy and a readiness to come to the defense of the victories of Great October.

The international situation became seriously more complex at the end of the 1920's. The imperialists threatened a new war and the internal counterrevolution became more active. On this occasion the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee in June 1927 adopted an appeal to all party organizations and to all workers and peasants "On the Threat of Military Danger." This appeal played an important role in increasing the vigilance of the Soviet people as well as the Army and Navy personnel. The 15th Party Congress instructed the Central Committee to adopt measures to further strengthen the "defense capability of the nation, the might and combat capability of the Worker-Peasant Red Army, the air force and navy...."⁵ The party and government adopted other measures aimed at strengthening the USSR Armed Forces as well as increasing the vigilance of the army and the people.

By the middle of the 1930's, the aggressive Berlin--Rome--Tokyo bloc had formed. Under these conditions, the Communist Party focused the brunt of political vigilance on disclosing the anti-Soviet plans of this bloc's states and in the summer of 1938 this made it possible to deal a crushing rebuff to the Japanese militarists in the area of Lake Khasan. In May-September 1939, on the Khalkhin-Gol River, Soviet-Mongolian troops dealt a major defeat to the Japanese invaders who had entered Mongolian territory.

At the end of the 1930's, Nazi Germany began to prepare actively for an attack on the USSR. Under a situation of the advancing war, the 18th VKP(b) Congress outlined a program of action to ready the nation and the Armed Forces to repel the aggressor. The congress demanded "increased combat might of the Red Army and Navy and the strengthening of the international ties of friendship with the workers of the entire world."⁶

The treacherous attack by Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union placed our country under exceptionally difficult conditions. During the first days of the war, the Communist Party urged "all party, soviet, trade union and Komsomol organizations to put an end to complacency and carelessness and to mobilize all...the forces of the people for defeating the enemy."⁷

During the years of the Great Patriotic War, the question of vigilance assumed primary significance. The party demanded that the enemy's intrigues be unmercifully unmasked and that spies, saboteurs and persons spreading provocative rumors be captured and disarmed. Thousands of enemy agents, scouts and their supporters during the war found an unglorious end on the front and in our rear. The enemy did not succeed in spreading panic among the Soviet people or undermining our nation's economy. The maintaining of secrecy contributed to the successful conduct of operations by the Soviet Armed Forces during all the stages of the war.

In the postwar period, the balance of forces on the world scene changed fundamentally in favor of socialism. However, imperialism did not lay down its arms. It represents a serious danger. In carrying out Lenin's legacy, the CPSU

viewed political vigilance of the Soviet people and combat readiness of the Army and Navy as a most important state obligation and patriotic duty. The questions of increasing vigilance have been reflected in the CPSU Program, in the decisions of the party congresses, in the decrees of the CPSU Central Committee and in other documents.

The party has constantly pointed to the increased subversive actions by imperialism against the forces of socialism and peace. The 26th CPSU Congress pointed out that world imperialism has set out to undermine a lessening of international tension, it is increasing the arms race and carrying out a policy of intimidation and interference into the affairs of other states. The military preparations by the aggressive circles increase tension in the world and raise the threat of the outbreak of a new war. The congress called on the party and all the Soviet people to show high vigilance against the aggressive intrigues by imperialism and its minions. In turning to the Soviet people and to the men of the Armed Forces with an appeal to be ready at any moment to repel a threat of imperialist aggression, the CPSU has proceeded from Lenin's demand to always be on guard.

In increasing the threat of war and concerned tension, a special role is played by the course of the present U.S. leadership the policy of which is an extremely militaristic and reactionary one in comparison with the line of any of the postwar Washington administrations. In speculating on the false notions of a "Soviet military threat," it has constantly increased military efforts and unleashed an arms race. The United States continues to carry out the long-range program adopted in 1981 of replacing the strategic nuclear weapons including the land-based continental ballistic missiles, nuclear missile-carrying submarines and strategic bomber aviation.

In its "crusade" against socialism, the U.S. administration has endeavored to rely on the cult of force and the dictating of terms in international affairs. It has announced new programs to develop weapons of mass destruction based upon recent scientific achievements and discoveries, including the systems and means for conducting combat operations in space. It has adopted strategic concepts and doctrines such as: "the first disarming nuclear strike," "limited nuclear war," "extended nuclear conflict" and others. The U.S. ruling circles, with criminal irresponsibility, have discussed nuclear war as completely admissible, in endeavoring to reconcile the public to such a prospect.

In the hegemonistic aspirations of the aggressive imperialist forces, a special place is assigned to Europe. In our times here a tense military-political situation has developed. On the European continent, in the armed forces of the NATO bloc there are 94 divisions (considering Spain), 25,000 tanks, 986 carriers of nuclear weapons and a large number of other combat equipment and weapons.⁸ The NATO countries have stated their intention at the end of 1983 to begin deploying in Western Europe 108 American Pershing-2 ballistic missiles and 464 land-based, medium-range cruise missiles. The main purpose of this act is to eliminate the nuclear missile parity between the USSR and the United States, the Warsaw Pact and NATO and create a new military-strategic situation which is advantageous for the United States and its allies. As a whole, over the last 10 years, the expenditures by this aggressive bloc for military purposes have exceeded 1.6 trillion dollars.

The increased military preparations of the United States and the other countries of the NATO bloc have been accompanied by provocations and subversion against the USSR and the socialist countries in the area of economics, politics and ideology. Here our class opponents "are acting against the socialist nations evermore perfidiously and deftly."⁹ They, in essence, have turned the ideological struggle into "psychological warfare" against the USSR and the other states in the socialist commonwealth. The aim of this "warfare" is to destabilize the existing system in the countries of the socialist commonwealth with the aim of political subversion, espionage and diverse subversive propaganda actions.

Imperialist propaganda has resorted to unpardonable lies and misinformation on real socialism, its policy and its Armed Forces. Numerous institutes in the United States and the other capitalist countries work for these purposes. Enormous amounts are spent on maintaining the radios such as Voice of America, Liberty and Radio Free Europe the activities of which are directed by the CIA. The American radios broadcast over 93 hours a day in just the languages of the Soviet peoples.

In the psychological thrust against real socialism, one can see rather clearly new particular features in ideological subversion. In the first place, they have not only become a component part of state policy and are worked out, planned and implemented by the highest levels of power in the imperialist countries, but are also coordinated on a scale of all the most reactionary forces of the imperialist world. Clear proof of this is the Directive of the U.S. National Security Council, according to which the overt foreign policy activities of the government should be supplemented by the conducting of covert operations. Such covert operations will, in particular, include propaganda measures, political actions, economic warfare, preventive subversive operations, sabotage, the blowing up of important installations, the organizing of raids, misinformation and other measures helping to achieve the goals.

Secondly, the basic center of gravity in the psychological attacks more and more is moving into the sphere of military questions. This tilt has not occurred accidentally. The increased threat of war by the United States and its allies at present is at the epicenter of not only the class interests of people throughout the world but also their common human interests.

In endeavoring to play down and stifle the wave of the antiwar movement in various nations, to justify the arms race and to achieve superiority over the USSR and the socialist states, Washington is replacing one propaganda campaign with another. "To the people they either emphasize the 'Soviet military threat' or unconsciously lie about the strategic 'lag' of America. Either they fear 'international terrorism' or fabricate absurdities about events in Poland, in Central America, South and Southeast Asia."¹⁰ Actively participating in the chorus of lies are not only the politicians but also the military figures of the West, in publishing articles and in appearing on the TV and radio.

Thirdly, there is an ever-greater merging of ideological subversion with the subversive actions of imperialism against the forces of socialism and progress. Political demagoguery is combined with slogans in defense of peace, with the use of political, diplomatic and economic "sanctions" and with the persecuting

and murdering of progressive figures and fighters for national and social liberation. Here they use blackmail, hostility and hate are instilled among the progressive organizations, espionage is carried out, and counterrevolutionary forces in the socialist and other countries are supported. This was particularly apparent in the middle of 1980, when Poland became an object of the massed action of the Western special services, and presently Nicaragua is the case.

The ideological subversives of imperialism are endeavoring to introduce their agents deep in our society and to influence unstable persons and youth by propaganda in the aim of undermining the monolithic unity of the party, the people and the army.

The aggressive circles of imperialism view ideological subversion as a component in the war being prepared by them and they are endeavoring to influence the Soviet people in the aim of instilling in them a bourgeois psychology and morality and Philistine prejudices. This can be seen in the attempts to disseminate anti-Soviet leaflets and publications of religious and pornographic literature among the personnel, workers and employees of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany [GSVG].

The aspirations of imperialism are being opposed by the effective work of the CPSU to strengthen the Soviet state, to reinforce its economic and defense might and to indoctrinate the people and their armed defenders. The party views revolutionary vigilance as a most important moral-political quality in the Soviet man, in stemming from the interests of society and our morality. To be vigilant and ready at any moment to carry out the motherland's combat order to check and defeat the aggressor is the main task of the Armed Forces as stated in the new USSR Constitution.

The immortal legacy of V. I. Lenin and the instructions of the Communist Party and the Soviet government lie at the basis of the work carried out by the military council, the commanders, the political workers, the party and Komsomol organizations with the personnel of the GSVG. We know that vigilance is not an innate quality. It is formed in the process of daily training and service. Here it is considered that the troops are in a nation which is exposed particularly intensely to ideological influence from the various West German special services.

For the personnel of the GSVG, to be vigilant means to serve the motherland as the great Lenin admonished and as the USSR Constitution and the military oath require, that is, to always be in a state of high combat readiness to defend the forward frontiers of the socialist commonwealth countries, to strictly keep military and state secrets, to prevent carelessness and indifference during the standing of alert duty, guard duty and internal service, to wage an irreconcilable struggle against bourgeois ideology and to follow the principles of proletarian internationalism.

The questions of vigilance and the keeping of military and state secrets are analyzed and systematically discussed in the military council sections, in the staffs and political bodies and in the party and Komsomol organizations; they are also reviewed in the course of political training and political education for the servicemen, workers and employees of the Soviet Army.

In the GSVG definite positive experience has been acquired in indoctrinating the men in a spirit of high vigilance. The studying of Lenin's theoretical heritage, the materials of the 26th Party Congress and the decrees of the CPSU Central Committee hold an important place in the work of the commanders, the political bodies and party organizations in indoctrinating vigilance. In the units and formations, practical scientific and theoretical conferences are held for the officer personnel and warrant officers ["praporshchik"]. Recently a conference was held on the subject "The 26th CPSU Congress on the Broadening and Exacerbation of the Ideological Struggle at the Present Stage. The Tasks of Officers and Warrant Officers in Indoctrinating the Personnel in High Ideological Stability, Political Vigilance and Constant Readiness to Defend the Motherland and the Victories of Socialism." In political exercises and information sessions, the aggressive essence of imperialism, the particular features of its psychological warfare and the hostility of its ideology and policy are explained to the personnel, and the true face of the U.S. and NATO military is shown.

In the work of indoctrinating vigilance, the commanders, political bodies, the party and Komsomol organizations proceed from the view that with powerful modern weapons and combat equipment in the armed forces it is inadmissible that the enemy catch us unprepared. In a future war, if the imperialists begin it, there is no time for hesitation or for correcting mistakes.

Vigilance is inseparably linked with combat readiness, with a state of the Armed Forces whereby they are capable at any moment and under the most complex conditions of repelling and thwarting aggression from wherever it may originate and whatever means and methods the enemy may use. A lessening of vigilance inevitably leads to a reduction in troop combat readiness. In the course of daily troop training, constant emphasis is put on the importance of increasing vigilance, strictly observing discipline and flawlessly carrying out the regulations and instructions. We see to it that the soldiers, sergeants, warrant officers and officers in everything follow the demands of the laws and military oath, that they always and everywhere maintain exemplary order and organization and carry out the tasks confronting them with a feeling of high responsibility.

Our agitation-propaganda and cultural-educational measures aimed at indoctrinating vigilance are based on the combat and revolutionary traditions of the Soviet Armed Forces as well as the formations and units in the GSVG troops. The commanders and political workers in speeches popularize the heroic past of the famous units and formations which fought their way to victory during the years of the Civil and Great Patriotic Wars. Many of them bear honorary names. Of great importance in indoctrinational work with the personnel was the celebrating of the 40th anniversary of the famous victories of the Soviet Army in the Great Patriotic War. The history of our Armed Forces persuasively urges the present defenders of the motherland to increase vigilance and to strengthen combat readiness in every possible way.

The group and large-run newspapers also carry out great work in indoctrinating vigilance in the personnel. The materials published on their pages unmask the ideological subversion of imperialism and the aggressive essence of its strike grouping, the NATO bloc. The readers have shown great interest and lively

response to the articles published under the headings "Where Capital Rules," "Soldier Be Vigilant!" and others. The newspapers regularly publish materials which describe how the personnel is carrying out the oath and vigilantly standing alert duty, guard duty and internal service.

"International Commentary," "Military-Political Review," "From Where the Threat to Peace Originates," "Fighting Bourgeois Ideology" and other broadcasts each week are made by the "Volga" group radio. These unmask the aggressive intrigues of the imperialist forces. We also use television in indoctrinating high vigilance and personal responsibility for the inviolability of the forward frontiers of the socialist commonwealth countries.

The commanders, the political workers, the party and Komsomol organizations have focused their efforts on excluding the preconditions for the revealing of military and state secrets. The military council and the political directorate of the GSVG have worked out a system of measures aimed at strengthening discipline in the troops. Among them is increased political indoctrination, improved troop services, having the communists and Komsomol members set an example in service, improved material, routine and cultural services for the men and so forth.

Legal propaganda is also aimed at instilling vigilance in the servicemen. In many units there are lecture series on legal knowledge, conferences, lectures and talks are held regularly and there are lectures on "The Soldier and the Law." Active forms of propaganda are widely used, including: special-subject evenings, debates and contests on the questions of increasing vigilance, combat readiness and strengthening military discipline. The young soldiers are explained the need of maintaining military secrecy in corresponding with relatives and close friends as well as the rules of conduct on GDR territory.

The party and Komsomol organizations have also carried out active work to combat carelessness and thoughtlessness. Particular attention has been given to working with the men directly on alert duty and in the course of guard and internal duty. The communists, the Komsomol group organizers and the agitators hold talks with the men on the active shifts, and organize the exchange of experience, the studying of the military regulations, the reading of newspaper and magazine articles and the putting out of combat leaflets. The visual agitation of the GSVG units and subunits is aimed at indoctrinating vigilance as well.

Many commanders and political workers solve the problems of increasing vigilance on the basis of scientific research considering the psychological patterns in the activities of the men under the specific conditions of alert duty. In the unit where the communist V. Rogozin serves, they have generalized the experience of increasing the moral-psychological strength of the personnel and of maintaining high vigilance in the personnel on alert duty. At present, this is being introduced in the GSVG units and subunits.

We are greatly in debt to the initiative which was directed at the personnel of the Ground Forces by the men in the Order of Lenin, Red Banner, Order of Kutuzov Proskurov-Berlin Guards Tank Regiment imeni G. I. Kotovskiy to develop a socialist competition under the motto "To Increase Vigilance and Ensure the

Security of the Motherland!" The personnel of the units and subunits are struggling steadily to carry out the assumed socialist obligations.

The competition is an important means for increasing the activity of the men in training and in mastering the combat specialties, it helps to bring out the best qualities and abilities of a man and to find new reserves for improving their skills, for raising vigilance and combat readiness.

Unflagging attention is given to indoctrinating the personnel in a spirit of socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism. In the troop collectives, lectures are given systematically, talks and special-subject evenings are held and here they convincingly show the heroic accomplishments of the multinational Soviet people and the other countries of the socialist commonwealth in building socialism and in defending the victories of the workers.

The strengthening of friendship with the men of the GDR National People's Army [NPA]. We have established strong friendly ties with NPA units and subunits. In 1982 alone, more than 20,000 joint measures of an international nature were carried out. Around 1,400 men and employees of the Soviet Army were awarded GDR medals and honor badges. In joint exercises, in attending drills and in the course of meetings on different levels, the questions are brought up not only of training and indoctrination and improving the field skills of the personnel, but also further increasing vigilance against the intrigues of the enemies of peace and socialism.

With all forms of work we see to it that each man is profoundly aware that vigilance for a defender of the motherland is primarily unflagging combat readiness and the ability in the most complex situation to expertly operate the complex modern equipment and weapons and to do everything necessary for a decisive rebuff of any aggressor and for thwarting its perfidious plans against our nation and its allies.

The men of the GSVG serve outside the motherland with their thoughts directed toward the motherland and toward the party which placed them here in an important and responsible post. We are well aware of the true plans of the enemies of socialism, we fully recognize their danger and remember and carry out the legacy of Lenin and the party's instructions of always being on guard. Shoulder to shoulder with the armies of the Warsaw Pact countries, the personnel of the GSVG guard peace and security in Europe. We see our patriotic and international duty in maintaining vigilance and constant combat readiness on the highest level.

FOOTNOTES

¹ V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 39, p 55.

² PRAVDA, 13 November 1982.

³ V. I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 23, p 166.

⁴ Ibid., Vol 42, p 173.

- ⁵ "KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s'yezdov, konferentsiy i plenumov TsK" [The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions of Congresses, Conferences and Central Committee Plenums], Vol 4, Moscow, Politizdat, 1970, p 16.
- ⁶ Ibid., Vol 5, 1971, p 333.
- ⁷ "KPSS o Vooruzhennykh Silakh Sovetskogo Soyuza" [The CPSU on the Soviet Armed Forces], Voenizdat, 1981, p 297.
- ⁸ "Otkuda iskhodit ugroza miru" [From Whence the Threat to Peace Derives], 2d Edition, Voenizdat, 1982, pp 74, 79.
- ⁹ "Materialy XXVI s'yezda KPSS" [Materials of the 26th CPSU Congress], Moscow, Politizdat, 1981, p 9.
- ¹⁰ PRAVDA, 23 April 1982.

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IMPORTANCE OF KURSK BATTLE IN WORLD WAR II REVIEWED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 83 (signed to press 24 May 83) pp 12-25

[Article by Hero of the Soviet Union, Professor, Army Gen S. P. Ivanov¹:
"Completing the Turning Point in the War"*]

[Text] The Battle of Kursk has gone down in the treasury of military history as one of its most vivid pages. The importance of this event can be understood only having analyzed that historical situation in which it occurred and in considering all the objective and subjective factors precisely of that crucial historical moment.

Prior to the Kursk Battle, the Nazi Wehrmacht and the Third Reich as a whole had already experienced two major crises related to the important defeats on the Soviet-German Front at Moscow and Stalingrad. The Hitler leadership by every means was endeavoring to lessen the political and military consequences

* For this period, see: "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, Voenizdat, 1976, pp 135-249; "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Vol 4, Voenizdat, 1977, pp 536-539; Vol 1, pp 481-484; "Operatsii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voynе" [Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War], Vol 2, Voenizdat, 1958, pp 183-410; "Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945" [The History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union of 1941-1945], Vol 3, Voenizdat, 1961, pp 237-494; "Istoriya voyennogo iskusstva" [The History of Military Art] (Lecture Series), Vol 6, Moscow, Izd. Voennoy akademii imeni M. V. Frunze, 1956, pp 127-311; "Vitva pod Kurskom" [The Battle of Kursk], Moscow, Nauka, 1975; "Kurskaya bitva" [The Battle of Kursk], Moscow, Nauka, 1970; "Kurskaya bitva. Vospominaniya, stat'i" [The Battle of Kursk. Memoirs, Articles], Vorinezh, Tsentral'no-Chernozemnoye knizhnoye izd-vo, 1973; "Na ognennoy duge. Vospominaniya, ocherki" [On the Fiery Salient. Memoirs, Essays], Voenizdat, 1963; N. M. Zamyatin, et al., "Bitva pod Kurskom" [The Battle of Kursk], Moscow, Voennoye izdatel'stvo Narodnogo komissariata oborony, 1945; G. A. Koltunov and B. G. Solov'yev, "Kurskaya bitva" [The Battle of Kursk], Voenizdat, 1970 and others.

of its defeats, to prevent the collapse of the Nazi bloc, to recover the lost strategic initiative and change the course of the war in its favor. Here it is assumed that only major offensive operations on the Soviet-German Front could resolve such problems.

It is essential to bear in mind that Nazi Germany was continuing to economically plunder on an ever-greater scale the enslaved countries of virtually all Europe. It took human resources from them and imported lacking materials from the so-called neutral countries. Due to this the Third Reich ensured within maximum limits its military production which continued to grow. In 1943, in comparison with the previous year, the German monopolists increased the production of the large caliber artillery pieces. Production reached 35,800 pieces and this was 250 percent [over the previous year]. Some 10,700 tanks and assault guns were produced or 172.6 percent; for aircraft 25,200, that is, 171.4 percent. The output of antiaircraft guns, air cannons and machine guns also increased. The basic emphasis was put on the tank industry which was generously supplying the troops with new types of tanks such as the "Panther" and "Tiger" and the "Ferdinand" type assault guns. Production was also established for aircraft having high combat performance, including the Fokker-Wulf-190A and the Henschel-129. By this time Nazi Germany had concentrated 232 divisions on the Soviet-German Front, including 36 divisions of its allies, that is, almost 72 percent of all the troops in the operational army. These troops were armed with 54,300 guns and mortars, 5,850 tanks and assault guns and 2,980 combat aircraft.²

The outcome of the Battle of Stalingrad undermined the faith of the Nazi troops in their ability to win the war. However, the Hitler clique did not want to accept the existing situation. In February-March 1943, on the Southwestern section of the front, the Nazi Command undertook a rather major counteroffensive. Because our troops had been weakened in previous continuous offensive battles on this section of the front and were deeply cut off from their supply bases, the enemy again succeeded in capturing Kharkov, Belgorod and the Northeastern regions of the Donets Basin. Our advance toward the Dnepr was halted.

All of this meant that the retaining of strategic initiative by the Soviet side under these conditions could be guaranteed only by a maximum straining of all forces, by a complete preparation for the summer campaign and the skillful execution of the pending operations. Considering the advantageous position of its troops in the area of the Kursk Salient, the enemy determined to encircle and destroy the troops of the Central and Voronezh Fronts by pincer movements from the north and south and then to attack in the rear of the Southwestern Front. The victory won in the south should, in the opinion of the Nazi leadership, create the prerequisites for developing the offensive on a northeasterly axis in the aim of coming out deep in the rear of the central grouping of Soviet troops and threatening Moscow. After the defeat of the Soviet troops on the southern wing an offensive was to be made against Leningrad. Characteristic of the enemy's plans was a wagering on the massed use of modern types of combat equipment, primarily mobile troops, tanks and assault guns.

How much importance was given to the offensive can be seen in the operational order of Hitler, No 6 of 15 April 1943: "I have determined, as soon as weather conditions permit, to conduct the offensive 'Citadel' the first offensive this

year. Crucial importance is given to this offensive. It should end with a rapid and decisive success. The offensive should put the initiative in our hands for the spring and summer of the current year. In this regard all preparatory measures must be carried out with the greatest carefulness and energy. The best formations, the best weapons, the best commanders and a large amount of ammunition should be used in the sector of the main thrusts. Each commander and each ordinary soldier must fully understand the crucial importance of this offensive. The victory at Kursk should be a torch for the entire world."³

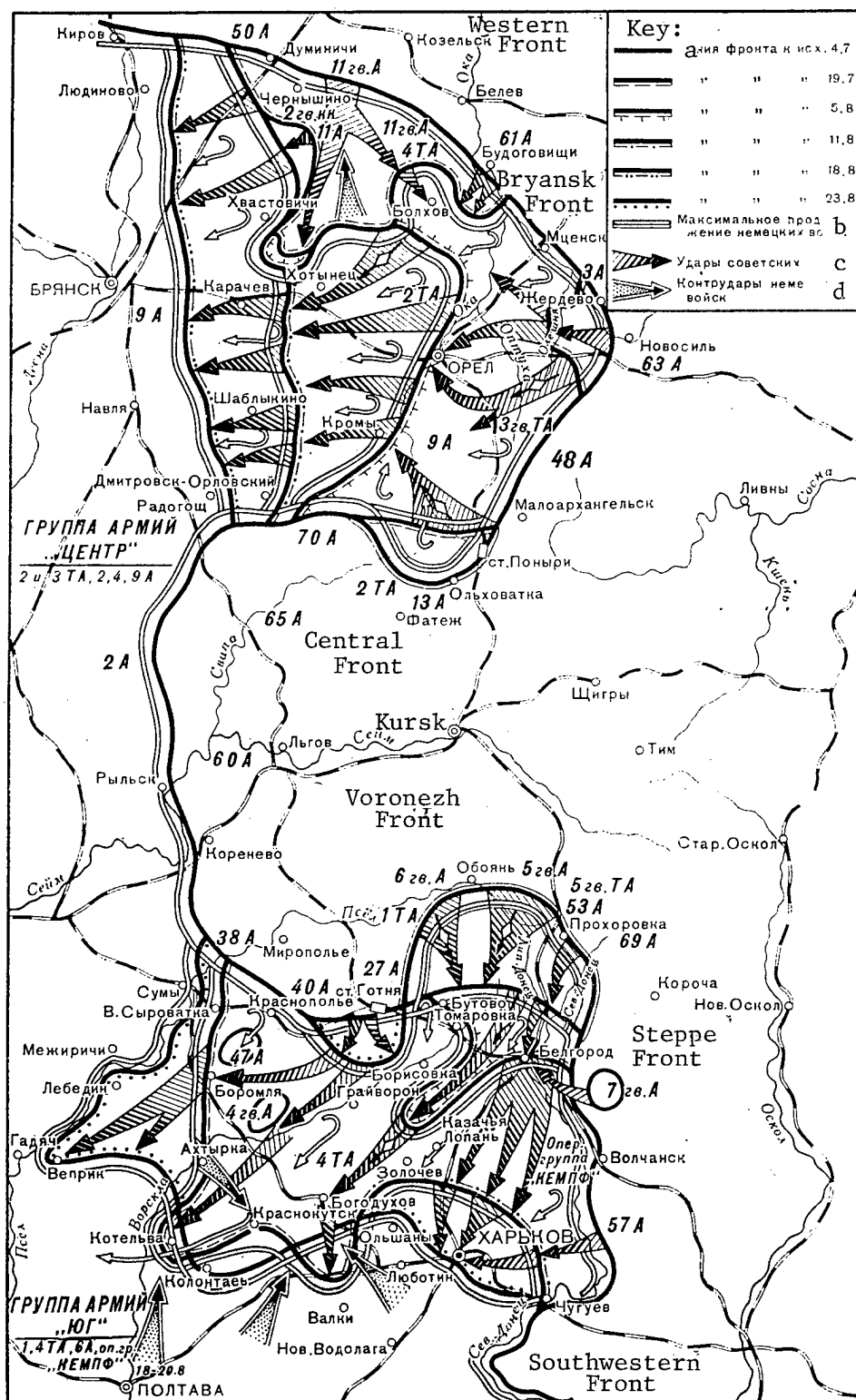
For implementing its plans, the Nazi Command had concentrated 50 crack divisions on the selected sectors, including 16 tank and motorized ones.⁴ These troops were distributed approximately evenly between the Army Group Center (commander Kluge) and Army Group South (commander Manstein). The offensive was prepared for two narrow sectors comprising just 13 percent of the total length of the Soviet-German Front.

Although the intentions of the Nazi side were known to us and, possibly, for precisely this reason in planning the new campaign on the staffs of the Central and Voronezh Fronts there was a lively exchange of opinions. For the first time we were confronted with the possibility of choice: we could either ourselves commence the offensive or wait until the enemy started it. The staff of the Central Front in the aim of defeating the Orel Nazi grouping before it was ready for the offensive proposed a plan of a pre-emptive offensive, while the command and staff of the Voronezh Front were in favor of an intentional defensive. In truth, the sector of the main thrust proposed by us in the course of the counteroffensive did not coincide at all with the ideas of Hq SHC [Headquarters, Supreme High Command].

On 12 April, a meeting was held at Hq SHC which discussed the question of the plan for the 1943 summer-autumn campaign. At this, it was decided to commence the campaign by a rigid defense on previously prepared and deeply echeloned lines which would bleed the enemy, then crush its assault groupings and go over to a general strategic offensive. This version of the plan was adopted as the basic one. At the same time, another version was not excluded, an offensive one, in the event that the Hitler Headquarters in the near future did not commence active offensive operations.

The offensive and defensive operations on the Kursk Salient were unified by a common plan and represented a system of operations the implementation of which should ensure the firm holding of strategic initiative and the going over to a general offensive by the Soviet troops on the major sectors of the Soviet-German Front.

In accord with the plan, the troop groupings were organized (see the diagram). In a defensive engagement the basic role was to be played by the Central Front (commander, Army Gen K. K. Rokossovskiy, military council member Maj Gen, from 24 August 1943, Lt Gen K. F. Telegin, and chief of staff Lt Gen M. S. Malinin) and the Voronezh Front (commander, Army Gen M. F. Vatutin, military council member Lt Gen N. S. Khrushchev and chief of staff Lt Gen S. P. Ivanov). In the rear of these operational-strategic field forces were concentrated the troops of the Steppe Front, a powerful strategic reserve of Hq SHC (commander, Col Gen I. S. Konev, military council member Lt Gen Tank Trps I. Z. Susaykov and chief



General Course of Kursk Battle

Key: a--Front line by end of; b--Maximum advance of German troops;
c--Strikes by Soviet troops; d--Counterstrikes by German troops.

of staff, Lt Gen M. V. Zakharov). After achieving the goal of the defensive operation, the second stage of the battle was to commence, that is, the going over to an offensive by the troops on the left wing of the Western Front (commander, Col Gen V. D. Sokolovskiy, military council member, Lt Gen N. A. Bulgagin and chief of staff Lt Gen A. P. Pokrovskiy), the Bryansk Front (commander, Col Gen M. M. Popov, military council member Lt Gen L. Z. Mekhlis and chief of staff Lt Gen L. M. Sandalov) and the Central Front followed by the Voronezh, Steppe and the right wing of the Southwestern Front (commander, Army Gen R. Ya. Malinovskiy, military council member Lt Gen A. S. Zheltov and chief of staff Maj Gen F. K. Korzhenevich).

In knowing about the concentration of a large grouping of enemy troops in the region of Glazunovka and Tagin and also considering the direction of the main highway here between Orel and Kursk, the commander of the Central Front felt that the enemy would strike against Kursk via Ponyri. This notion was also reinforced by the fact that an enemy offensive in any other sector would not create a special threat for us, since the troops and reinforcements of the front located opposite the basis of the Orel Salient could be sent to any threatened sector. Even in the event of enemy success, its offensive could only lead to the displacement of our troops and not to their encirclement and defeat.

The troops of the Voronezh Front defending the southern face of the Kursk Salient (a length of defenses of 244 km) had to consider the probability of an enemy offensive from three directions: from Belgorod to Oboyan, from Belgorod to Korocha and from the region of Murom toward Volchansk and Novyy Oskol. At the staff we wracked our brains over which of these three sectors entailed the greatest threat. Finally we decided to report to Hq SHC that the sectors from Belgorod to Oboyan and from Belgorod to Korocha were approximately equally dangerous. N. F. Vatutin and later Headquarters agreed with this. For this reason we concentrated the basic forces on the left wing of the front.

On the Kursk Salient which was 550 km long, the Central and Voronezh Fronts brought together over 1.3 million men, up to 20,000 guns and mortars, 3,444 tanks and SAU [self-propelled artillery mount] (including over 900 light and medium ones) and 2,900 aircraft (including long-range aviation). Here were deployed up to 26 percent of the men, guns and mortars, 33.5 percent of the combat aircraft and 46 percent of the tanks in the operational army. In this sector of the front, the Soviet troops exceeded the enemy as follows: by 1.4-fold for personnel, by 1.9-fold for guns and mortars, by 1.2-fold for tanks and SAU and by 1.4-fold for aircraft.⁵ Considering the Steppe Front, these figures increase but certainly not so much as they have been exaggerated by certain bourgeois historians and former Nazi generals.

In preparing the Soviet Army for the crucial engagements against the Nazi invaders, the CPSU Central Committee, the Soviet government, the State Defense Committee and Hq SHC did enormous work to increase the combat might of the Army and Navy, to further rally the people around the party, to strengthen the moral of the troops, to increase the production of new combat equipment and weapons (see the table), to improve the organizational structure of the troops and to create reserves and train personnel.

Table

Production of Most Important Types of Military Equipment in USSR*

Military Equipment	July- December 1941	1942	1943
Machine pistols	89,700	1,506,400	2,023,600
All types of machine guns	106,200	356,100	458,500
Guns of all types and calibers	30,200	127,100	130,300
Mortars	42,300	230,000	69,400
Tanks and SAU	4,800	24,400	24,100
Combat aircraft	8,200	21,700	29,900

* "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 12, 1982, p 168.

Over the entire period preceding the battle (April-June 1943), the Soviet Command on a planned and steady basis prepared the troops for the forthcoming engagement and erected echeloned defenses. As an example, let me give certain data on the Central and Voronezh Fronts the troops of which carried out a colossal amount of work. They dug 5,992 km of trenches and communications trenches, 65,901 rifle and machine gun emplacements, they prepared 26,097 emplacements for antitank rifles, 9,333 command and observation posts, thousands of dugouts and shelters and up to 700 km of wire obstacles.⁶ In the main defensive areas of the fronts an average of one antitank strongpoint was created per 2.5 km of front.

The start of the operation was preceded by planned and intense combat training. Chief attention was given to teaching the troops effective methods of combatting tanks. Measures were taken aimed at further improving party political work. According to the decree of the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee, the primary party organizations began to be organized in battalions. The regimental bureaus were considered equal to party committees and this helped to improve leadership by the communists in the inferior levels. Thousands of communists joined the troops and this further raised the fighting spirit of the men.

On 2 July, we received a coded message over the signature of I. V. Stalin and A. I. Antonov that the enemy could be expected to go over to the offensive during the period from 3 through 6 July.

In the zone of the Voronezh Front it commenced the offensive somewhat earlier than on the northern face. Regardless of the heroic resistance by the battle outpost subunits of the 6th Guards Armies, the Nazi forward detachments with air and artillery support, by the evening of 4 July, had succeeded in confining them in a sector to the west of Dragunskiy. It became perfectly obvious that at dawn the main forces would attack. For this reason at 2230 hours we commenced artillery counterbombardment in the area of the 6th Guards Army and at 0400 hours on 5 July repeated this now in the area of two armies, the 6th and 7th Guards. The enemy suffered significant losses and this forced it to

commence the offensive 3 hours later than the planned time. Some 450 tanks were moved up to our positions to an air cover.

The enemy encountered heavy artillery fire. The artillery troops operated from indirect firing positions even at long ranges. Then the mortar troops, the direct laying crews, the machine gunners and riflemen entered battle. They accurately hit the targets and the infantry which has dismounted from the armored personnel carriers. The enemy suffered high losses and was frequently forced to halt.

During the day the enemy infantry units, with support from 50 to 200 tanks each, continued their fierce attacks. However, the front's troops in a majority of the sections held firmly onto their positions. Only in the center of the defenses of the 6th Guards Army did the Nazis succeed in driving in 4-6 km. This was achieved at a price of high casualties. In the sector of the 7th Guards Army, the Nazi troops, in benefiting from a significant superiority in forces, crossed the Severskiy Donets to the southeast of Belgorod and seized a small bridgehead on the left bank of the river.

In the developing situation, the commander of the Voronezh Front ordered the commander of the 1st Tank Army to move up two corps to the second defensive line of the 6th Guards Army and firmly hold the defenses along the line of Melovoye, Yakovlevo. The II and V Guards Tank Corps were sent to the regions of Teterevino and Gostishchevo in order, if necessary, to make a counterstrike toward Belgorod and prevent the enemy from developing the offensive to the northeast. The 69th Army and the XXXV Rifle Corps were moved up from the front's second echelon. The defenses of the 40th Army were also reinforced. As a result the enemy grouping which had driven a wedge was caught in the clutches of our tanks and antitank artillery. The two guards rifle divisions (67th and 52d) defending in the first zone continued to fight. By 9 July, in the zone of the Voronezh Front, a tense situation had developed. Then Hq SHC issued instructions to move up the troops of the Steppe Front to the Belgorod-Kursk sector. The 27th Army with the IV Guards Tank Corps was sent to the area of Kursk, the 53d Army with the I Mechanized Corps to the frontline along the Seym River (to the southeast of Kursk) and the 5th Guards Army to the army defensive zone from Oboyan to Prokhorovka. The 5th Guards Tank Army was ordered to concentrate to the north of Prokhorovka. The 5th Guards Tank Army and the 5th Guards Army became part of the Voronezh Front.

A large portion of the tanks were dug in so that they, in remaining invulnerable, could greet the enemy with accurate fire from a halt. This combined with the defensive actions of the artillery and infantry, as events were to show, created an insurmountable barrier on the enemy's path.

As a result of all these measures, the enemy's hopes of rapidly crossing the second defensive zone and breaking out into the operational expanse were thwarted. Only in the center of the defenses of the 6th Guards Army in a narrow section did the enemy succeed in breaking the second line and drive 3-8 km into it. On 8-9 July, fierce battles in the Oboyan sector continued. The enemy advanced another 6-8 km.

In this situation, the commander of the front decided in the morning of 12 July to make counterstrikes using the forces of the 5th Guards Tank Army and 5th Guards Army from the area of Prokhorovka to Yakovlev and with the forces of the 1st Tank Army and a portion of the forces of the 6th Guards Army from the northwest to Verkhopenye.

At dawn of 12 July, our aviation made mass strikes against the enemy troops. After heavy artillery fire, the infantry and tanks went over to the attack. The basic events developed in the zone of advance of the 5th Guards Tank Army and the 5th Guards Army. A fierce tank engagement, unprecedented in the history of wars, commenced and this lasted the entire day of 12 July. It was difficult to determine who was advancing and who was on the defensive. Hundreds of tanks moved on the battlefield and the tank troops were forced to fire at point-blank range. The prevailing heights, villages and settlements repeatedly changed hands. The Soviet tank troops, in confidently using the maneuverability of their vehicles, fired from short ranges, knocking out the heavy enemy tanks. However, our losses were also high.

The engagement at Prokhorovka involved 1,200 tanks and assault guns simultaneously on both sides ended in the defeat of the Nazi troops in this sector. During the day the Nazis lost up to 400 tanks, 500 motor vehicles and over 4,500 soldiers and officers. Without achieving success in the offensive, they were forced to go over to the defensive.

On the Central Front, from the morning of 5 July, artillery counterbombardment was also carried out and this spread confusion in the ranks of the enemy troops. It took over 2 hours for the German Command to bring them out of this state. At 0530 hours the Orel grouping of Nazi troops went over to the offensive along the entire sector of the 13th Army and on the right flank of the 70th Army, making their main thrust on a narrow sector of the front. Without being successful on 6 July in the center and on the left flank of the 13th Army, the enemy on the morning of 7 July shifted its basic efforts to Ponyri. For 2 days fierce battles raged continuously here. Ponyri changed hands but ultimately remained with the troops of the Central Front.

Over the 6 days of continuous attacks, the enemy had succeeded in driving just 6-12 km into our defenses. The troops of the Central Front had carried out their mission. By stubborn resistance they had exhausted the enemy. The offensive of the Nazi troops in the summer of 1943, as widely publicized by Gobbels propaganda ended ingloriously.

The second stage of the Kursk Battle commenced on 12 July. The Soviet Army went over to a counteroffensive which developed into two major offensive operations: the Orel (code name "Kutuzov") conducted from 12 July through 18 August, and the Belgorod-Kharkov (code name "Rumyantsev") which was carried out from 3 to 23 August. Both were secretly prepared for. The operational regroupings of the formations and their moving up to the jump-off position for the offensive were carried out only at night. Engineer work was strictly camouflaged. At the same time the defenses were openly being reinforced.

"In no instance did we expect," stated Keitel in his testimony after the war, "that the Red Army was not only prepared to repel our strike but itself possessed sufficient reserves to go over to a powerful counteroffensive."⁷

In preparing the troops for the operations, great attention was given to the supplying of the units and formations with ammunition and fuel. The command and political bodies gave basic attention to party political work among the men. Its task had changed. While previously it was aimed at indoctrinating steadfastness on the defensive in the men, now it was to create an unbreakable offensive drive. The scope of party political work was unusually broad. Thousands of propagandists and agitators brought into the masses of soldiers the ardent words of the Communist Party which urged them to carry out feats and challenged them to defeat the hated enemy as rapidly as possible.

On 12 July, the 11th Guards Army of the Western Front, supported by the aviation of the 1st Air Army, and the troops of the Bryansk Front (the 61st, 3d and 63d Armies), supported by aviation from the 15th Air Army, attacked, respectively, the enemy 2d Tank Army and 9th Army which were on the defensive in the area of Orel. On 15 July, the troops on the right wing of the Central Front went over to a counteroffensive. They attacked the southern flank of the enemy Orel grouping. The enemy, in endeavoring to check the offensive, began to shift formations from other sections of the front to the threatened sectors.

In order to prevent the Nazi Command from altering the balance of forces in its favor, Hq SHC decided to commit its reserves to battle. The troops of the Western Front were reinforced by the 4th Tank Army and the 11th Army and by the II Guards Cavalry Corps while the troops of the Bryansk Front received the 3d Guards Tank Army.

In developing the offensive, the troops of the Bryansk Front deeply outflanked the enemy grouping in the region of Mtsensk, they forced it to retreat and on 5 August, with assistance from the troops of the Western and Central Fronts fighting on the flank, as a result of fierce battles, liberated Orel.

Over the period from 12 July through 18 August, the Soviet troops advanced 150 km to the west. The powerful Wehrmacht grouping which had been created for the offensive against Kursk from the north suffered severe losses. The enemy Orel Salient was eliminated.

The counteroffensive by the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts in the Belgorod-Kharkov sector started in the morning of 3 August. A decisive thrust was made by the adjacent wings of these fronts from an area to the northwest of Belgorod on the general axis of Bogodukhov, Valki and Nov. Vodolaga. After the rifle troops of the Voronezh Front had driven into the main defensive zone of the enemy, the first echelon brigades from the corps of the 1st and 5th Guards Tank Armies were committed to battle and these completed the breakthrough of the defensive tactical zone and as a mobile group of the front began to successfully advance into the operational depth.

The troops of the Steppe Front which were advancing to the north of Belgorod for up to 15 hours conducted fierce battles in the enemy's main defensive zone. In order to accelerate things, the commander committed to battle the I Mechanized Corps which completed the breakthrough of the main zone. On the next day, in bypassing the centers of resistance, the formations of the Voronezh and

Steppe Fronts developed an offensive to the south along the entire front. The tank units in a day advanced up to 20 km. Regardless of the fierce enemy resistance, the 69th Army broke through to Belgorod on the north. In the morning of 5 August, battles commenced continuously for the city. During this time the troops of the 7th Guards Army, having crossed the Severskiy Donets, threatened the enemy garrison in Belgorod from the south. By evening the city had been liberated.

The strike against Belgorod and its further development toward Kharkov stunned the German Command with its might and surprise. The Germans rapidly began shifting tank and motorized formations here from the south. The commanders of the fronts anticipated this maneuver and reported immediately to I. V. Stalin. Hq SHC issued instructions for using the aviation of the 8th, 17th, 2d and 5th Air Armies for attacking the enemy. As a result of their coordinated actions, the enemy divisions suffered high casualties and were unable to prepare promptly for the counterstrikes. The shifting of the enemy reserves was also disrupted by partisan attacks against the rail lines.

In continuing the offensive, the troops of the Voronezh Front in 5 days advanced more than 100 km and by the end of 7 August had captured the important enemy strongpoints, the towns of Bogodukhov and Grayvoron, and on 11 August cut the Kharkov-Poltava railroad. The troops of the Steppe Front had come close to the Kharkov defensive perimeter and as a result of this had created the threat of capturing the basic forces in the Army Group South.

Using formations which had come up from the south, the command of the Army Group South undertook counterstrikes initially from the area to the south of Bogodukhov using the forces of three tank divisions (11-16 August), and then from around Akhtyrka using the forces of three tank and two motorized divisions. The enemy succeeded in halting the advance of the troops from the right wing of the Voronezh Front, but the Nazis did not achieve their set goal. Air strikes and the actions by the 47th Army and 4th Guards Army which were committed to battle to the north and northeast of Akhtyrka localized the enemy breakthrough.

On the approaches to Kharkov (in the area of Bogodukhov and Akhtyrka), the Wehrmacht Command was searching for an opportunity to stabilize the front and go over to a steady positional defense. But all its efforts were in vain. On 13 August, the troops of the Steppe Front broke through the external defensive perimeter built by the Nazis 8-14 km from the city. In the course of the following 4 days of battle, they reached the inner perimeter and initiated battles in the northern suburbs of Kharkov. On 23 August the city was completely cleared of invaders. A large portion of the German grouping in the city had been destroyed.

In the course of the Belgorod-Kharkov Operation which ended the Battle of Kursk, 15 enemy divisions were defeated, including 4 tank ones. The fronts involved in the operation had advanced a distance of up to 140 km to the south and to the southwest. The front of the offensive had widened to 300 km. Conditions were created for the liberation of the Left Bank Ukraine.

The Battle of Kursk had ended victoriously, but our offensive continued. Even in the course of it the command of a number of fronts had received orders to initiate an offensive on a front from Velikiye Luki to the Black Sea. As before the southwestern sector remained the main one. The Central, Voronezh, Steppe, Southwestern and Southern Fronts were given the task of defeating the opposing enemy grouping, liberating the Left Bank Ukraine and the Donets Basin, reaching the Dnepr and capturing bridgeheads on its right bank.

On 11 August, the German Command issued orders for the immediate construction of the Eastern Embankment, a strategic defensive line running from Narva, Pskov, Vitebsk, Orsha, Sozh, along the middle courses of the Dnepr and the Molochnaya River. The Dnepr, with its high and steep banks, great depth and rapid current, was to become the basis for this iron belt.

The Soviet troops in the southwestern sector as before were confronted by a powerful enemy grouping which was constantly receiving reinforcements. This grouping included the 2d Army from the Army Group Center, the 4th Tank Army, the 8th and 1st Tank Armies and the 6th Army from the Army Group South. It numbered some 1.24 million soldiers and officers, 12,600 guns and mortars, around 2,100 tanks and assault guns and 2,100 combat aircraft. Here the Soviet troops had 2,633,000 men, over 51,200 guns and mortars, more than 2,400 tanks and SAU and 2,850 aircraft.⁸ The ratio was in favor of the Soviet Army. In terms of personnel we had a superiority of 2.1-fold, for tanks 1.1, for aircraft 1.4 and for just guns and mortars 4-fold.

Preparations for the new engagements took place under very difficult conditions. The 6 weeks of continuous battles at Kursk had led to a situation where a large portion of the combat resources accumulated for the summer of 1943 had been depleted; the troops were a significant distance away from the supply bases while the railroad network had not yet been completely rebuilt. The troops had to be supplied with everything essential basically by cart and motor transport and this was in short supply. Regardless of this, the Soviet Command was able to regroup the troops, to bring up the rear services and replenish the supply of ammunition.

The troops of the Central Front, after heavy artillery softening up and with air support, on the morning of 26 August went over to the offensive. They made the main thrust on the axis of Sevsk, Novgorod-Severskiy, but here they encountered a large enemy grouping and as a result achieved a comparatively small success. On the other hand, to the south of Sevsk, the 60th Army and IX Tank Corps by the end of August had advanced 60 km to the southwest and entered the northern rayons of the Ukraine. The commander of the Central Front, in using this success, shifted a significant portion of the forces from the right wing here and they moved rapidly toward Nezhin.

The main forces of the Voronezh Front attacked toward Poltava and Kremenchug and the troops of the Steppe Front toward Krasnograd Verkhne-Dneprovsk. The offensive, however, found it hard going: in fearing a flank attack against its troops in the region of the Donets Basin, the enemy resisted stubbornly. Nevertheless, the armies on the right wing of the front on 2 September liberated Sumy and were moving successfully toward Romny.

On 13 August, the troops of the right wing of the Southwestern Front went over to the offensive, and on 18 August the formations of the Southern Front. On 30 August, the Soviet troops defeated a major enemy grouping and this forced it to begin pulling back a portion of the forces from the Donets Basin to the west.

At that time the troops of the Central Front were advancing very successfully in the direction of Nezhin and those of the Voronezh Front toward Romny. Because of this the necessity arose of adjusting the plan for further actions.

On 6 September, Hq SHC, in considering the changes which had occurred in the situation, set new boundaries for the fronts and adjusted the directions of their advance. The Voronezh Front was aimed toward Kiev and from the reserve of Hq SHC it was given the 3d Guards Tank Army. The Steppe Front was ordered to drive toward Poltava and Kremenchug. It was reinforced by the 37th Army from the Reserve of Hq SHC and the 5th Guards Army of the Voronezh Front and the 46th Army of the Southwestern Front were incorporated in it.

During the last 10 days of September the troops of the Central Front reached the Dnepr at the mouth of the Pripyat and by the end of the month had reached the Sozh and Dnepr Rivers in an area from Gomel to Yasnogorodka. The troops of the Voronezh Front had also advanced rapidly. Its mobile formations on 21 September had reached the Dnepr at Pereyaslav-Khmelnytskyi. Almost simultaneously, on 23 September, the formations from the left wing of the Steppe Front liberated Poltava and those of the right wing reached the Dnepr at Kremenchug.

The formations of the Southwestern Front threw the Nazis across the Dnepr in a section of the river from Dnepropetrovsk to Zaporozhye. At this same time the troops of the Southern Front reached the Molochnaya River. Thus, the entire Left Bank Ukraine and Donets Basin were liberated.

In the course of the offensive, energetic preparations were carried out in the troops for crossing the Dnepr so as to disrupt the enemy's plans which had endeavored to halt our advance on this line. Even at the distant approaches to the river, the commanders and staffs had designated areas convenient for the crossing and organized the collecting of available crossing equipment.

The Dnepr was successfully crossed by the troops of the Voronezh Front. During the night of 22 September, the forward units of the 3d Guards Tank Army without a halt crossed the river to the southeast of Kiev, in the area of Velikiy Bukrin. Then, in repelling enemy counterattacks, they widened this bridgehead up to 11 km along the front and 6 km in depth. The Steppe Front also achieved a major success. During the night of 25 September the troops of the 7th Guards Army were the first to reach the right bank of the Dnepr to the northwest of Verkhne-Dneprovsk. Over the following 5 days the bridgehead reached 25 km along the front and 15 km in depth. At the same time, troops of the Southern Front crossed the Dnepr in the region to the south of Dnepropetrovsk.

Thus, by the end of September, as a result of the simultaneous crossing of the Dnepr, the troops of the four cooperating fronts had captured 23 bridgeheads on its right bank and these served subsequently as springboards for the offensive in the Right Bank Ukraine and for liberating its capital, ancient Kiev.

The turning point in the course of the Great Patriotic War and World War II in favor of the Soviet Union and the anti-Hitler coalition as a whole ended with the victory in the battle on the Kursk Salient and the reaching of the Dnepr by the Soviet troops.

The victory at Kursk is of permanent military-political significance. In the Battle of Kursk enormous forces were committed by both sides, including: over 4 million men, over 69,000 guns and mortars, more than 13,000 tanks and SAU and up to 12,000 combat aircraft. Over the 50 days which the battle lasted, 30 crack enemy divisions were defeated, including 7 tank ones; the Wehrmacht lost over a half-million soldiers and officers, 1,500 tanks, more than 3,700 aircraft and 3,000 guns.⁹

The Battle of Kursk led to a further change in the balance of forces on the front, it finally reinforced the strategic initiative in the hands of the Soviet Command and created favorable conditions for initiating a general strategic offensive by the Soviet Army.

Our Armed Forces during the summer and autumn of 1943 conducted offensive operations on a front up to 2,000 km long, they advanced to a depth of 300-600 km and liberated a territory of more than 395,000 km², 38,000 population points, including 160 cities. Millions of Soviet people were freed from Nazi slavery and the nation recovered major economic regions.

In the course of the general strategic offensive by the Soviet Army, enemy troops were defeated in the Donets Basin, the Left Bank Ukraine and in the central section of the front. The enemy lost around 1.5 million soldiers and officers, 3,200 tanks, up to 10,000 aircraft and up to 26,000 guns and mortars.¹⁰

The Wehrmacht's offensive strategy suffered a complete defeat. The balance of forces changed decisively in favor of the Soviet Army. Strategic initiative shifted finally to the hands of the Soviet Command. The capturing of major bridgeheads by the Soviet troops on the western bank of the Dnepr meant the collapse of the enemy's plans to stabilize the frontline and to change the war into one of positional forms.

The Soviet Army until the end of the war imposed its will on the enemy. On none of the major operational sectors of the still enormous Soviet-German Front did the leadership of the German Wehrmacht have any opportunity to conduct large-scale offensive actions. The defensive and retreat in the strategic and operational plans became the sole lot for the recent pretenders to world domination.

The defeat of the Nazi troops at Kursk and the general strategic offensive by the Soviet Army in the autumn of 1943 involved not only profound changes on the Soviet-German Front but also had a decisive influence on the military-political situation, they led to the further exacerbation of the crisis in the Nazi bloc and helped to increase and broaden the liberation movement in the world as well as strengthen resistance to the Nazi regime in the European nations. The domestic political situation in the satellite countries deteriorated and the foreign policy isolation of the German Reich grew. The belief

in the possibility of a victory for Nazi Germany was undercut once and for all. The specter of inevitable catastrophe confronted the German Reich.

The victories won by the Soviet Armed Forces further increased the authority of the Soviet Union on the international scene. No major political problem relating to the conduct of the war and the postwar organization of the world could be settled without the participation of the Soviet Union. All of this significantly accelerated the victorious conclusion of World War II.

Thus, the reaching of the turning point in the war represented an extended, complex and difficult period full of major military-political events. During this period, decisive and irreversible shifts occurred in the balance of forces of the belligerents in the military, economic and political areas as well as major changes in the strategic situation on the fronts.

The historic victory won by the Soviet Army in the summer and autumn of 1943 was a natural one. It was brought about by the superiority of the Soviet social and state systems, by the wise leadership of the CPSU, by the invincible strength of our multinational people and by the superiority of Soviet military art over the military art of the Nazi Army.

Bourgeois military historians for 40 years have endeavored to understate the importance of the Battle of Kursk and to exclude it from the major events of World War II. They have zealously played down those political and operational-strategic conclusions which inevitably arise with a more or less objective analysis of events in 1943 on the Soviet-German Front and their international consequences.

But no matter how the minions of the bourgeoisie endeavor to falsify the importance of the Battle of Kursk, they are unable to deny its enormous influence on the course and outcome of the war on the Soviet-German Front and World War II as a whole. The truth about the great victory of the Soviet Army at Kursk, in breaking through the veils of lies and intentional distortions of the historical facts, has reached the peoples in the capitalist countries. And the truth is that the crushing defeat of the Nazi troops in the Battle of Kursk clearly and convincingly demonstrated the full superiority of the Soviet military organization, military science and military art. It also was evidence of the increased economic, political and military might of the Soviet Union.

The victory was achieved due to the high moral and combat qualities of the Soviet troops who showed unprecedented stubbornness on the defensive, a great thrust on the offensive, skill, mass heroism and valor.

In the Battle of Kursk, our soldiers showed examples of courage, self-sacrifice and high skill on a mass scale. Over 100,000 soldiers and officers received orders and medals and 180 men were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. From April through December 1943, 407 formations and units became guards ones, 302 received the Orders of Lenin, the Red Banner, the Order of Suvorov and the Red Star while 625 corps, divisions, brigades and regiments received the honorary name of the major population points liberated by them.¹¹

The feat carried out by the Soviet Armed Forces in this historic battle will remain for centuries as a magnificent monument to the courage and valor of the Soviet soldiers and their bravery.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ During the described period, the author of the article was the chief of staff of the Voronezh Front.
- ² "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [The History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, pp 84, 113-114.
- ³ "Soversheno sokretno! Tol'ko dlya komandovaniya!" [Top Secret! For the Command Alone!], Documents and Materials, Moscow, Nauka, 1967, p 502.
- ⁴ This was around 70 percent of the tank divisions, up to 30 percent of the motorized ones and more than 20 percent of the infantry divisions out of the total number of ground formations on the Soviet-German Front.
- ⁵ "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 7, p 144.
- ⁶ "Kurskaya bitva" [The Battle of Kursk], Moscow, Nauka, 1970, p 484.
- ⁷ "From the Verbatim Notes of Interrogating Field Mar Wilhelm Keitel of 17 June 1945," VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 9, 1961, p 85.
- ⁸ "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Vol 1, Voenizdat, 1976, p 482.
- ⁹ Ibid., Vol 4, p 539.
- ¹⁰ "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 7, p 278.
- ¹¹ Ibid.

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GENERAL DESCRIBES DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGY, OPERATIONAL ART IN KURSK BATTLE

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 83 (signed to press 24 May 83) pp 26-33

[Article by Hero of the Soviet Union, Army Gen A. Luchinskiy: "On Certain Questions in the Development of Strategy and Operational Art in the Battle of Kursk"]

[Text] During the major engagements of the summer of 1943, Soviet military art underwent further development and rose to a new level. It was enriched by the experience of preparing and conducting a defensive against strong enemy assault groupings armed with a large number of tanks, artillery and supported by powerful air strikes. For the first time during the war the Soviet Army undertook a major summer offensive which then developed along the enormous front from Velikiye Luki to the Black Sea. Combat operations, in comparison with the previous period, were carried out on a higher technical level and maximum use was made of previously obtained experience. The organizational abilities of the command were particularly apparent and the combat skill of the troops rose significantly. This gave the operations an intense character and at the same time made it possible to conduct them with more decisive goals than before and to a greater depth.

One of the most important manifestations of the maturity of Soviet military strategy was the decisions of Hq SHC to intentionally go over to a strategic defensive with an overall superiority in men and weapons on the side of the Soviet Army. Such a decision showed the ability of the Supreme High Command to penetrate deeply into the enemy's plans and overall concepts, to realistically consider the existing situation and correctly approach the choice of the most advisable types of military operations and the forms and methods of conducting them.

In preparing the Soviet forces for the great summer offensive, Hq SHC carefully followed the enemy's actions. In the spring, intelligence had succeeded in promptly detecting the preparations for a major enemy offensive to the north and south of Kursk. This had made it possible for the SHC to take a strategically effective decision in good time. In the subsequent study of the intentions of the Nazi Command the directions of the main thrust were correctly determined and then the time of the offensive by the enemy assault troop groupings. Intelligence established not only the day but also the hour that the

enemy was to go over to the offensive on the Orel and Belgorod sectors. The enemy's basic ploy on a strong surprise attack did not work.

Also important was the circumstance that the early going over of the Soviet troops to the defensive made it possible to carry out ahead of time a larger portion of the essential measures to prepare for the counteroffensive. The overall plan for the counteroffensive was drawn up, while large amounts of men and equipment, including the essential strategic reserves, were created and concentrated in the main sectors even before the start of the defensive engagement.

In the course of the defensive engagements, our command adjusted the tasks of the Western and Bryansk Fronts, it worked out plans for the going over to a counteroffensive by the Central, Voronezh and Steppe Fronts and committed to battle the troops of the Steppe Front, the reserve of Hq SHC. This helped to reduce the pause between the defensive actions and the offensive.

A major achievement in the development of Soviet military art was the creation on the Kursk Salient of a deeply echeloned strategic defensive that was insurmountable for the enemy.

In contrast to the defensive operations at Moscow and Stalingrad, the armies of the Central and Voronezh Fronts built three defensive zones with a broadly developed fire plan, particularly for antitank fire, and engineer fortifications. Three front defensive lines were also prepared. In depth the troops of the Steppe Front also prepared a separate defensive line and along the left bank of the Don a state defensive line was built. The overall depth of the engineer organization of the terrain reached 300 km. This not only ensured the stability of the defenses and the ability to resist massed strikes by large enemy tank groupings but also made it possible to create an advantageous operational configuration of the troops in the event of going over to a counteroffensive.

The counteroffensive at Kursk was characterized by the creative choice of the most advantageous methods of combat operations. Hq SHC, on the basis of a careful analysis of the existing situation, correctly determined the directions for the main thrusts and the forms of maneuver by the troops of the fronts. While in the counteroffensive at Moscow, strong strikes were made against the flanking groupings and at Stalingrad, against the enemy's weak forces along converging axes in the aim of encircling the entire grouping of advancing troops, at Kursk, in defeating the Orel enemy grouping it was planned that four strikes would be made some 50-60 km apart so as to break up the opposing enemy grouping into individual parts and to defeat them by encirclement and destruction of the troops in the area of Bolkhov. In the Belgorod-Kharkov Operation, the main thrust was to be made in the aim of deeply splitting the enemy grouping into two parts and outflanking Kharkov on the west. At the same time, auxiliary strikes were to be made by a portion of the forces which, in cooperation with the advancing groupings on the main sector, should surround and destroy the isolated enemy forces.

In the Battle of Kursk, Soviet strategy was enriched with new experience in the massing of men and equipment. In giving crucial significance to defeating the basic enemy groupings, Hq SHC concentrated large numbers of men and weapons on the main sectors, thereby providing the most decisive superiority of our troops over the enemy.

In preparing the defensive operation in the zone of the Central and Voronezh Fronts, there were concentrated the three tank armies existing in the Soviet Army, four air armies, the basic forces of long-range aviation, as well as a large number of individual tank, mechanized and artillery formations. On the Central Front, in the Olkhovatka sector in an area 25 km wide and comprising 31 percent of the total length of the defensive front were concentrated 58 percent of the rifle formations, 87 percent of the tanks and SAU [self-propelled artillery mount] and 70 percent of the artillery.¹

An even higher degree of the massing of men and weapons was achieved in the sectors of the main thrusts of the fronts in their going over to a counter-offensive. The Voronezh and Steppe Fronts in the Belgorod-Kharkov Operation in the sectors of the main thrusts comprising 14 percent of the total width of the zone of each front, concentrated 50-90 percent of the rifle troops, up to 80-90 percent of the tanks and SAU, 56-67 percent of the guns and mortars and a predominant portion of the aviation. This made it possible to achieve a significant superiority over the enemy and for the first time during the war years in these sectors to create high operational densities: 215-230 guns and mortars and up to 70 tanks and SAU per kilometer of breakthrough area.

The Soviet Supreme High Command showed high art in creating and using the strategic reserves. In April 1943, the Steppe Military District (from 10 July, the Steppe Front) was organized. At the beginning of June it had 5 all-arms armies, a tank army and an air army, 6 separate tank and mechanized corps as well as 3 cavalry corps. In addition, in the area of Kaluga, the 11th Army was being prepared, the 4th Tank Army in the region of Moscow, and the 3d Guards Tank Army to the east of Plavsk. The Steppe Front which was deployed in the second strategic echelon in the main sector was the war's largest field force for the strategic reserves of Hq SHC. It not only increased the depth of defenses on a strategic scale but also made it possible to promptly create an assault grouping for going over to the counteroffensive.

In the course of the counteroffensive using the strategic reserves Hq SHC additionally strengthened the front. Thus, the Western Front received the 11th and 4th Tank Armies and the II Guards Cavalry Corps; the Bryansk Front received the 3d Guards Tank Army; the Voronezh Front the 27th, 47th and 4th Guards Armies.

The committing to battle of the strategic reserves had a great impact on the course of the defensive engagement and the counteroffensive. Due to the committing of these reserves, the Soviet Command had an opportunity in the main

¹ For more detail on the massing of men and weapons, see "Kurskaya bitva" [The Kursk Battle], Moscow, Nauka, 1970, pp 139-140, 147-148.

sectors to create the necessary superiority over the enemy in men and equipment, in a short period of time to check the offensive of enemy assault groupings, without an extended pause to go over to the counteroffensive with decisive goals as well as maneuver broadly in carrying out the new tasks arising in the course of the operations.

Among the particular features of creating new strategic reserves and utilizing the existing ones, one must also put the transferral of troop formations to the reserve from the operational army with the maintaining of their staff and organizational structure as well as the high degree of readiness among the reserve field forces and formations to carry out both offensive and defensive tasks.

The Kursk Battle represents an instructive example in organizing strategic cooperation between the fronts and groups of fronts operating in different sectors as well as coordinating the efforts of the fronts, the Air Force, the National Air Defense Troops and the naval forces. In the aim of providing aid to the troops resisting the thrust of the enemy assault groupings, on 12 July an offensive was started by the Western and Bryansk Fronts, on 15 July the Central Front went over to a counteroffensive, and on 3 August the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts. After them in the Smolensk sector the Western Front (7 August) and Kalinin Front (13 August) went over to the offensive, and in the south the Southwestern Front (13 August) and Southern Front (18 August). The strong attacks by the Soviet troops in the different strategic sectors deprived the Wehrmacht Command of the possibility of regrouping its forces for increasing the pressure at Kursk, where the fate of the 1943 summer-autumn campaign was being determined, as well as to achieve major strategic successes in other sectors.

Hq SHC gave particular importance to organizing the strategic cooperation among the groups of fronts operating on the Orel and Belgorod-Kharkov sectors and up to 400 km distant from one another. In the course of the counteroffensive, their efforts were aimed at defeating the enemy groupings which had advanced previously and subsequently at rapidly reaching the Dnepr and crossing it along a broad front and without a halt.

In creating favorable conditions for the going over of the Soviet troops to a counteroffensive and then a general offensive, a major role was played by the winning of complete air supremacy in the course of the defensive engagement and, as a consequence of this, depriving the groupings of enemy ground troops of effective air support.

The basic efforts of the National Air Defense Troops were aimed at the interests of the fronts. They covered the rear installations and ensured the continuous operation of rail transport, the moving up of reserves and the regrouping of troops. Long-range aviation, in cooperating with the air armies of the fronts, was used for attacking major installations deep in the enemy rear, its troop groupings, airfields and lines of communications.

Hq SHC also put responsible tasks on the Navy. During the period when the enemy was throwing enormous forces against the Central and Voronezh Fronts, the military councils of the fleets received a directive with the demand to increase

combat activity by the fleet forces, to tie down the Nazi troops fighting on maritime sectors and to disrupt enemy lines of communications.

Also of important significance in the success of the counteroffensive on the Kursk Salient was the organizing of close cooperation between the Soviet troops and the partisan formations. The partisans, according to the plans of the Central Staff, were to make massed strikes against the enemy lines of communications, they created great difficulties for the enemy in regrouping troops and in delivering military equipment and materiel, and forced the enemy to assign significant forces to guard the rear areas and lines of communications. Just in the period from 22 July through 1 August, the partisans of Orel Oblast blew up more than 7,500 rails. As a result blockages arose on the enemy rail lines. From the middle of September, Operation "Concert" commenced. The enemy lines of communications were subjected to continuous attack. The partisan attacks were timed with the combat operations of the Soviet troops on the approaches to the Dnepr, in crossing it and with the struggle to capture and broaden the bridgeheads.

The strategic-level bodies also acquired great experience in the leadership of armed combat. For coordinating the training and actions of the operational field forces, Hq SHC sent to the fronts (groups of fronts) its representatives who possessed great powers. Even at the end of June, I. V. Stalin had instructed Mar SU A. M. Vasilevskiy to be closely concerned with the training of the troops for the Voronezh Front. He ordered Mar SU G. K. Zhukov to coordinate the actions of the Central and Bryansk Fronts, while aviation was to be the responsibility of Mar Avn A. A. Novikov. They provided substantial aid to the front commanders in organizing and conducting the operations, without infringing on their rights or restricting initiative. They coordinated the actions of the diverse men and equipment on the main sectors, they clarified the tasks for the fronts, they shifted aviation from one sector to another and reinforced the field forces with strategic reserves.

The operational art of the Soviet troops in the Battle of Kursk included enormous experience from the battles at Moscow and Leningrad, it rose to a new level and provided much that was new and instructive for preparing and conducting both defensive and offensive operations.

The creation of an insurmountable operational defense was above all a major achievement. Regardless of the fact that the Nazi Command concentrated strong assault groupings in the sectors of its offensive, they did not succeed in breaking through the operational defense of our troops. In the area of the Central Front, they were able to form a breach 10-12 km deep and in the area of the Voronezh Front to 35 km in depth.

In the fronts all-arms and tank armies began to be assigned to the second echelons and this made it possible to increase the depth of the defensive operational configuration to 50-70 km and create in it 5, and in individual sectors 6 defensive zones saturated with troops. General, artillery, artillery anti-tank, engineer and other reserves, mobile obstacle construction detachments and antiaircraft artillery groups became essential elements in the operational configuration of the field forces. All of this increased the possibilities of repelling the advancing enemy tanks and infantry as well as its air strikes.

The maneuvering of men and weapons played an important role in increasing the stability of defenses at Kursk. This was carried out by the second echelons and reserves both from depth and along the front. Maneuvering was carried out on the largest scale in the Voronezh Front. In the course of the defensive operation, around 35 percent of all the rifle formations comprising the front, virtually all the tank and mechanized corps and over 40 percent of all the antitank artillery were subjected to regrouping.

The maneuvering of minefields and obstacles assumed an exceptionally broad scope as these played an important role in combating the tanks. Minelaying carried out by the mobile obstacle construction detachments in the course of the defensive engagement was effective and to a significant degree helped to check the Nazi tank attacks.

The increased activity on the defensive at Kursk, in comparison with previous offensive operations, was expressed in the conducting of surprise artillery and air counterbombardment on a scale of the fronts and in making strong counterstrikes.

As a result of the counterbombardment carried out, the enemy assault groupings suffered losses. Their control and command was disrupted and the personnel exposed to the strikes was morally depressed. The enemy was forced to put off an offensive by 2.5-3 hours. To a certain degree the strength of the enemy attacks was reduced and the offensive from the very outset developed slowly.

The positional nature of the defenses, combined with the stubborn struggle to hold on to the occupied positions and zones envisaged active operations by all the branches of troops and aviation. One of the most important manifestations of the active defense of the Soviet troops was the counterstrikes undertaken. For making these, in cooperation with the aviation, chiefly the tank troops were employed which were positioned in the second echelons of the armies and fronts. For example, in the Central Front, involved in counterstrikes were the XVII Guards Rifle Corps, the XVI Tank Corps of the 2d Tank Army and the XIX Tank Corps from the front's reserve. The largest front-level counterstrike which had the nature of a meeting engagement was made by the troops of the Voronezh Front in the area of Prokhorovka. Here the basic role was carried out by the 5th Guards Tank Army and the 5th Guards All-Arms Army which had been moved up from the Steppe Front and were supported by the 2d and 17th Air Armies. In this tank meeting engagement, the enemy grouping suffered significant losses and this forced the Nazi Command to halt the offensive in the Prokhorovka sector and abandon further attempts to break through to Kursk from the south.

The crossing of deeply echeloned enemy defenses and the development of the offensive to a great depth required a continuous increase in forces not only on the tactical scale but also the operational one. This necessitated the deep echeloning of the troop operational configuration. In the counteroffensive at Kursk, for the first time the fronts had second echelons consisting of one or even two (Voronezh Front) tank armies and several tank and mechanized corps as powerful mobile groups. In addition, strong reserves were assigned. This made it possible for the front commanders to actively influence the course of the offensive by increasing the strikes by the first echelon troops and

developing the success in depth or towards the flanks, breaking through intermediate lines and repelling strong enemy counterstrikes.

In developing a successful offensive by the troops of the fronts a major role was played by the skillful organizing in repelling enemy counterstrikes. This was achieved by the prompt detection of the assault groupings being concentrated by the enemy and by the taking of the necessary measures to repel their counterstrikes. The army and front second echelons as well as the all-arms, artillery and tank reserves and the mobile obstacle construction detachments were rapidly moved up to the sector where the enemy counterstrike was being made. A portion of the troops went over to the defensive in order to prevent the further advance of the enemy. The remaining forces defeated the advancing enemy grouping by attacking in the flank and rear.

Of great interest is the experience of the offensive operations in the area of developing the tactical success into an operational one. This was related primarily to the art of using several tank armies of a new organization for these purposes. In the Orel Operation, the 2d and 3d Guards and 4th Tank Armies were used. The delay in committing to battle, the insufficiently successful choice of the sectors for their advance as well as the necessity of involving them in breaking through a deeply echeloned defense led to a situation where the actions of these tank armies did not produce the expected results. They were unable to break away from the infantry and as a consequence of this were not able to have a crucial influence on developing the success in the operation. However, as a whole the actions of the tank armies played an important role in eliminating the enemy Orel bridgehead and in defeating the large grouping of enemy troops in this sector.

The Belgorod-Kharkov Operation of the Voronezh Front is instructive from the viewpoint of the more successful use of the tank armies as a mobile group. After breaking through the enemy's tactical defensive zone, the 1st and 5th Guards Tank Armies of the Voronezh Front developed a rapid offensive in the operational depth. In operating in one sector, the tank armies were a unique armored fist by which a deep crushing attack was made against the opposing grouping. In advancing away from the all-arms armies, they conducted combat operations against the enemy operational reserves, they thwarted enemy maneuvers and attacked the flanks and rear of its basic grouping and this led to the disrupting of the stability of all enemy defenses.

As a whole, experience convincingly showed that the use of the tank armies and corps for breaking through previously prepared enemy lines led to great losses and to a weakening of the strike force of the advancing troop groupings. At the same time the tank mobile groups, after the breaking through of the enemy tactical zone by the all-arms formations, played a main role in developing the offensive in the operational defensive depth and in splitting the enemy groupings into isolated units.

Special attention should be given to the deception measures in the area of the Voronezh Front. For misleading the enemy on the actual direction of the main thrust in the Sumy sector, in the area of the town of Sudzha, in the zone of the 38th Army, that is, on the right wing of the front, they feigned the concentrating of a tank and all-arms army as well as artillery reinforcements.

In this area radios transmitted and received false coded documents and trains moved about intensely with dummy tanks, weapons and empty crating. The tanks, weapons, motor vehicles, cart transport and infantry columns moved up over dirt roads. As subsequent events were to show, these measures provided definite results.

Thus, in one of the crucial battles of World War II Soviet military art withstood a severe testing and was enriched with new ideas and conclusions. The Soviet Command demonstrated a creative and innovative approach to carrying out the most important tasks of strategy and operational art. The experience gained in this battle of preparing and conducting the defensive and offensive has largely maintained its importance under present-day conditions, too.

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DEVELOPMENT OF DEFENSIVE TACTICS IN KURSK BATTLE EXAMINED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 83 (signed to press 24 May 83) pp 34-44

[Article by Candidate of Historical Sciences, Col A. Bazhenov: "The Development of the Tactics of Defensive Combat from the Experience of the Kursk Battle"]

[Text] The organization and conduct of defensive combat at Kursk, in comparison with the first period of the Great Patriotic War, underwent substantial changes which had been caused by a whole series of factors. First of all, one must mention the increased level of the technical equipping of the rifle formations and units, the quantitative and qualitative growth of their weapons and combat equipment as well as reinforcements. With the assimilating of the experience from the defensive actions at Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad and with the improving of combat training, the combat skills of the Soviet soldiers rose to a higher level. The going over of the Soviet troops to an intentional defense on the Kursk Salient had a great influence on the tactics of defensive combat. All of this could not help but tell on the organization of the defensive and the methods of conducting it.

Major changes occurred in the configuration of the battle orders of the rifle formations (see Diagrams 1 and 2). This was caused by the fact that the Nazi Command for achieving the goals of the offensive operations in the summer of 1943, provided the making of attacks involving large masses of aircraft, tanks, artillery and motorized infantry on narrow areas of terrain. The repelling of these attacks required the deep echeloning of the units and formations, the creation of dense fire of all types and close cooperation of the men and weapons.

The increased depth in the configuration of the combat orders for the rifle formations at Kursk was also related to the restoring of the corps level of command in the Soviet Army. As a result of this, the tactical defensive zone was occupied by rifle corps and not rifle divisions, as was the case at Moscow and Stalingrad. In the main sectors, the corps were organized, as a rule, in two echelons. The first included two rifle divisions and the second had one. In line with this the overall depth of tactical defenses increased up to 15-20 km, that is, became 3-4-fold greater than at Stalingrad. However, it is essential to point out that the headquarters of the rifle corps in the all-arms

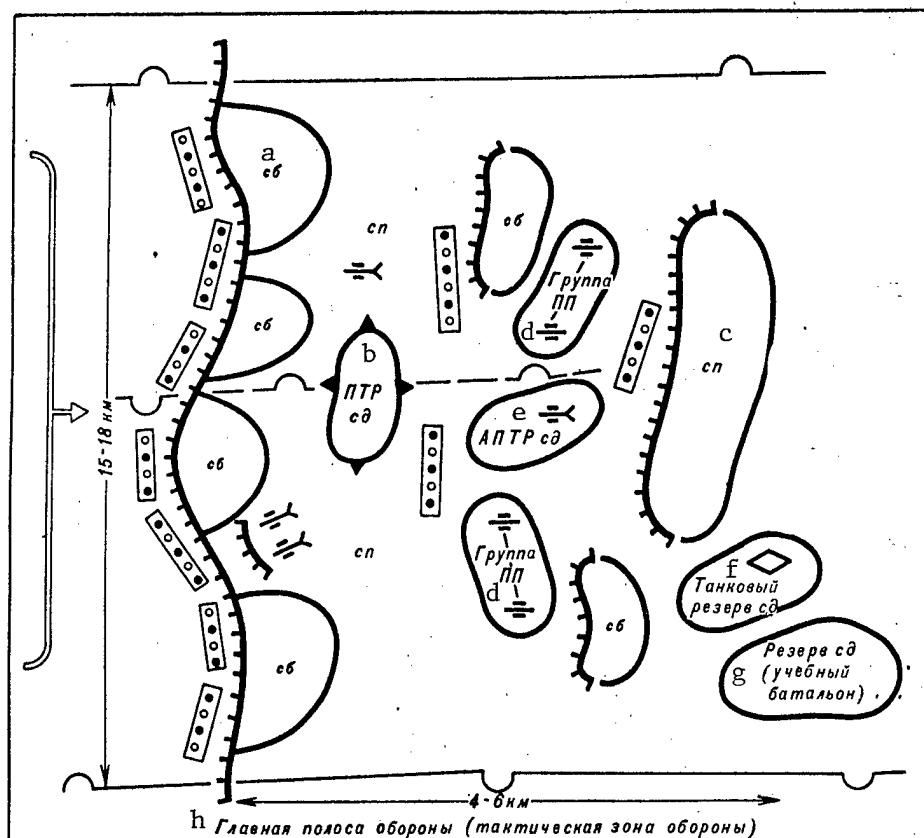


Diagram 1. Schematic Diagram for Organizing the Defenses of a Rifle Division at Stalingrad (July 1942)

Key: а--Rifle battalion; б--Antitank area of rifle division; в--Rifle regiment; г--Close support group; д--Artillery antitank area of rifle division; е--Tank reserve of rifle division; ж--Reserve of rifle division (training battalion); з--Main defensive area (tactical defensive zone).

armies were created only in the summer of 1943.¹ They still did not have corps units and this impeded the improving of the configuration of their battle formations. From the reinforcements in a corps, an artillery antitank reserve, a mobile obstacle construction detachment and a tank reserve were organized (see Diagram 3).²

The battle formations of the rifle divisions also underwent significant development. The quantitative and qualitative growth of the TOE weapons as well as the increased reinforcements made it possible for the divisional commanders, in organizing the defenses at Kursk, to create stronger first and second echelons, all-arms and artillery antitank reserves than at Stalingrad. Along with the artillery close support groups, a new element appeared in the battle formation, the long-range artillery group which ordinarily included two or three battalions. The mobile obstacle building detachments (a combat engineer platoon or combat engineer company with a supply of mines) were also a new element;

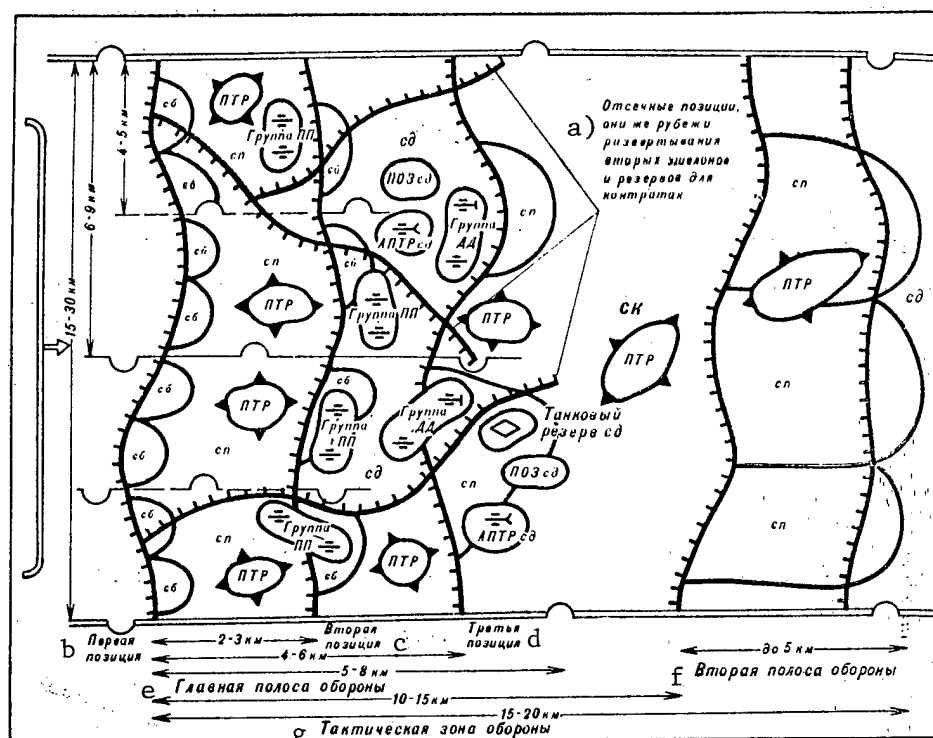
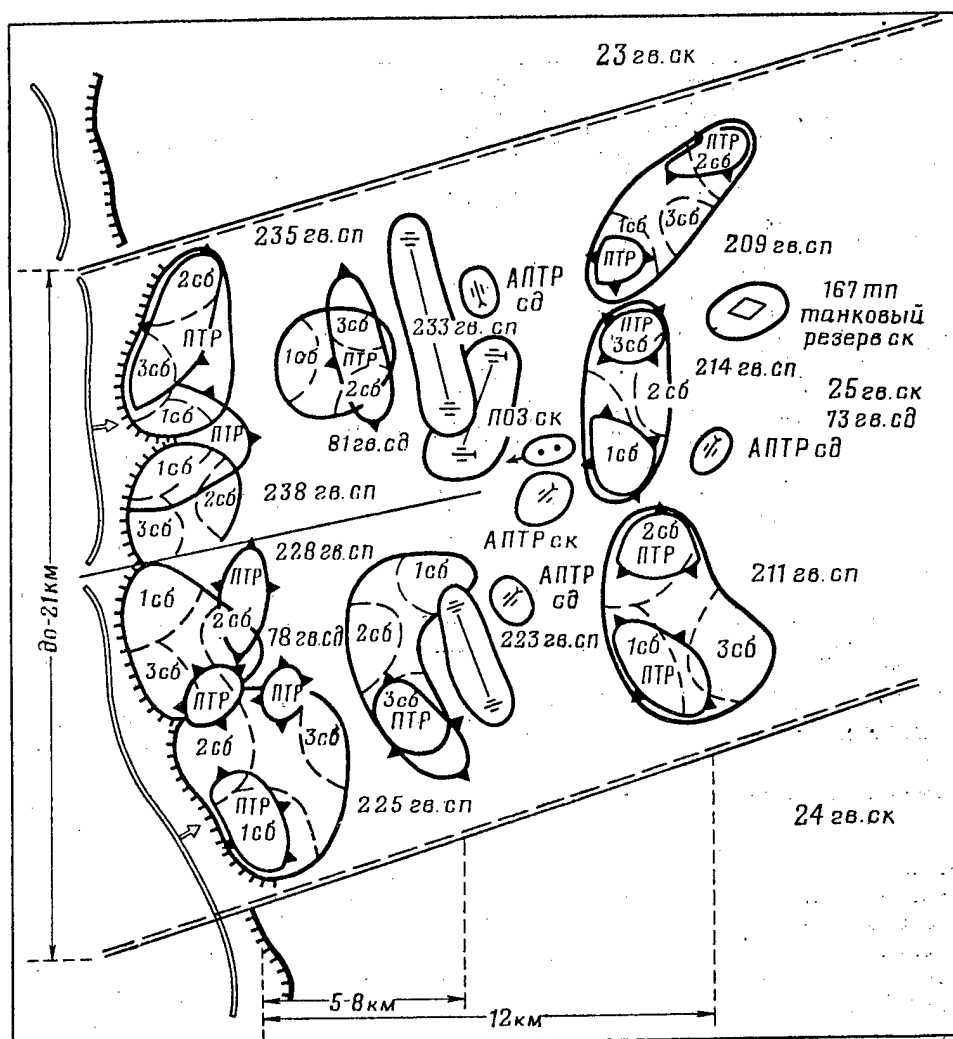


Diagram 2. Schematic Diagram for Organizing the Defense of Rifle Formations in Defense at Kursk

Key: a--Switch positions. They are deployment lines for second echelons and reserves for counterattacks; b--First position; c--Second position; d--Third position; e--Main defensive zone; f--Second defensive zone; g--Tactical defensive zone.

these were designed to rapidly set mines in the course of defensive combat on the routes of enemy tanks. A tank reserve also existed in certain divisions.

The assigning of significant men and weapons to the second echelon and the formation of a large number of antitank strongpoints (from 4 to 13) and anti-tank areas as well as various reserves brought about an increased depth in the battle formation of the divisions. At Moscow their depth did not exceed 3-4 km, at Stalingrad it was 6 km while at Kursk it was 5-8 km. In the aim of increasing the strength of the defenses, the divisions fighting in the main sectors were assigned relatively narrow areas. At Moscow the rifle divisions defended in areas 8-14 km wide, at Leningrad 15-18 km, but at Kursk only 6-9 km.³ With the increased men and weapons of the rifle formations as well as with the reduced width of their defensive areas, tactical densities grew sharply. Thus, at Stalingrad, per kilometer of front there were up to 0.8 rifle battalion, 10-12 guns and mortars, 1-2 tanks, while at Kursk there were already 0.7-1.5 rifle battalions, up to 18-30 guns and mortars and 2-4 tanks.⁴



The defenses of the Soviet troops on the Kursk Salient represented an ordered system of defensive positions and zones the engineer organization of which was carried out in strict accord with the demands of the "Instructions on Reconnaissance and Construction of Defensive Field Lines" (April 1943). This contributed to their insurmountability. The tactical defensive zone included two defensive lines and not just one as was the case at Moscow and Stalingrad. Diagram 4 provides a visual representation of the nature of their engineer organization.

The main defensive zone consisting, as a rule, of three defensive positions, switch positions and artillery firing positions, was prepared by the first echelon rifle divisions of the corps. The basis of the defensive positions was the battalion defensive areas (2 km along the front and 1.5-2 km in depth); these brought together the company zones and the latter the platoon strong-points.⁵

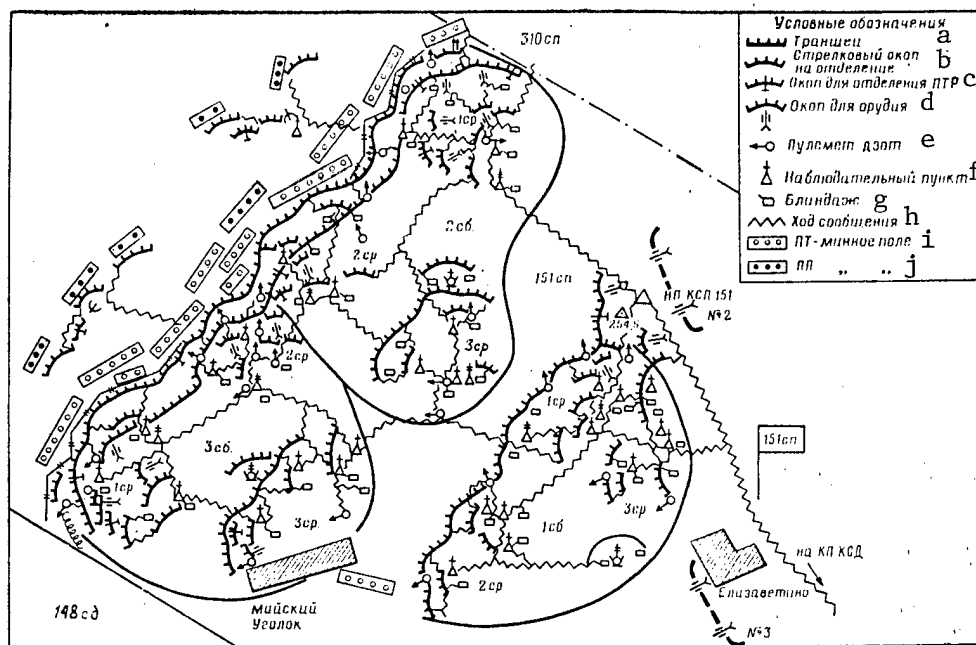


Diagram 4. Engineer Organization of Defensive Sector of 151st Rifle Regiment of 8th Rifle Division at Kursk on 29 June 1943

Key: a--Trenches; b--Squad fire trench; c--Trench for antitank rifle squad; d--Weapons emplacement; e--Machine gun pillbox; f--Observation post; g--Dugout; h--Communications trench; i--Antitank minefield; j--Antipersonnel minefield.

The first position from which it was intended that the enemy would be hit in front of the forward edge and in the near depth was the best prepared in engineer terms. It consisted of two-three solid trenches and communications trenches 1.2-1.7 m deep,⁶ a system of man-made obstacles and was occupied by the first echelon rifle battalions of the rifle regiments. The infantry heavy weapons were positioned in the second trench which was 150-250 m from the first. This excluded the hitting of personnel by enemy artillery firing in firing on one sight division and made it possible to keep under fire by the battalion's rifle weapons the first trench and the approaches to it. This improved fire coordination and increased the survivability of the forward edge. A third trench was dug 1-1.5 km behind the forward edge, forming the depth of a battalion defensive zone.

The second position (one or two trenches) was created by the second echelons of the rifle regiments in the form of separate rifle or battalion defensive zones some 2-3 km away from the forward edge. This ensured the disposition of the artillery firing positions and the artillery support for the men and weapons defending the first position as well as varying maneuvers in the aim of increasing the effort on the threatened sector or conducting counterattacks.

The third position was prepared by the second echelons of the rifle divisions. The divisional reserves were also positioned at this position or close to it.

In engineer terms it was less strongly equipped than the first position and included one or two trenches which were 4-6 km from the forward defensive edge. This distance did not make it possible for the enemy to cut it without definite preparations needed to organize a system of observation, the moving of a portion of the artillery firing positions and the corresponding regrouping of the forces.

For creating a stronger defense and supporting the flanks on the most important sectors, switch positions were also organized. Usually these had one or two trenches which were used simultaneously as deployment lines for the men and weapons involved in the counterattacks and were also built both within the defensive lines of the formations and on the boundaries of the divisions. Their total length, for example, in the 13th Army reached 45 km.⁷

As a whole the nature and amount of engineer work in the main defensive zone can be judged from the following data. On 30 June 1943, just in the zone of the 15th Rifle Division (commander, Col M. V. Dzhandzhgava), 65.4 km of trenches and communications trenches were dug; the following emplacements and trenches were built: 164 rifle, 122 machine gun, 116 for antitank rifles and 235 for guns and mortars; 470 dugouts and covered trenches were built, 74 pillboxes and 11 shelters; 56 minefields were laid as well as 5,270 linear meters of wire obstacles.⁸ The battalion and company defensive zones as well as the platoon strongpoints were prepared for all-round defense.

The second defensive zone was organized, like the main one, but in terms of the saturation with engineer works and obstacles was significantly inferior to it. It was prepared by the second echelon of the corps in order not to allow the enemy to break through into the operational depth after it had captured the main defensive zone as well as ensure the maneuver and direction of counterattacks. Its distance from the forward defensive edge of 10-15 km made it possible to provide simultaneous support for the divisions which were fighting for the main zone and deprived the enemy of an opportunity to attack the second zone without changing the artillery firing positions and regrouping the forces.

Thus, a new feature in the engineer organization of the terrain on the defensive was the complete conversion of the troops to a system of trenches and communications trenches, various shelters and obstacles. This system made it possible for the rifle formations and units to maneuver widely in the course of combat both along the front and from depth. At the same time it helped to increase the strength of defense, to improve control and cooperation as well as the effective use of all the resources in defensive combat. Moreover the trenches served as a dependable shelter for the troops against enemy firing, they made it easier to combat tanks while careful camouflaging of all the structures and installations made it difficult for the enemy to discover the weapons and establish the battle formations.

Enemy maneuvering was also impeded by the presence of the man-made obstacles. The mixed minefields became particularly widespread and this was caused by the possibility of their rapid laying, by the simplicity and effectiveness of use and by their low vulnerability to fire. The solid antitank and antipersonnel minefields were created not only ahead of the forward defensive edge, as was the case in the first period of the war, but also deep in the defenses. As a

result the mining density reached 1,700 antipersonnel and 1,500 antitank mines per kilometer of front; this was 4-fold more than in the defenses at Moscow and 2.5-fold more than at Stalingrad. The first position excelled in the highest obstacle density. Thus, on this position in each battalion defensive zone of the XXV Guards Rifle Corps an average of 1.6 km of wire obstacles was laid and 1,000 antitank mines per kilometer of defensive front.⁹

A most important condition which ensured the insurmountability of the defenses at Kursk was the well organized fire plan. During the first period of the war, the basic drawback of such a plan was the weak power of the antitank weapons as this did not make it possible to drive off massed enemy tank attacks. At Kursk, the fire plan began to be based on artillery fire and not on machine gun fire as had been the case at Moscow and partially at Stalingrad. The commanders of the rifle formations and units skillfully combined the fire of guns, mortars and personal weapons with the use of the man-made obstacles. For repelling massed enemy tank attacks, in front of the forward edge concentrated fire of all weapons was set up, the artillery was echeloned to the entire depth of the tactical defenses and wide use was made of the firing of tanks and SAU [self-propelled artillery mount] as well as the maneuvering of artillery and tanks to threatened sectors. All the weapons were prepared to fire under nighttime conditions while the subunits and units were ready to open fire quickly. Particular attention was given to the fire cover of the boundaries and flanks.

The plan for all types of fire was created according to a standard plan. Ahead of the forward edge of the main defensive zone a zone of solid fire was to be created to a depth of up to 400 m. Particular attention was given to organizing artillery fire. The corps commander set the tasks for the artillery and the places of the antitank zones of the corps and divisions. The divisional commander organized the firing of all types of weapons ahead of the forward edge and within the defensive zone of the division, the fire support for the boundaries and flanks. The regimental commander organized the fire of the regimental weapons and set the missions for the battalions in creating a cross-fire on the boundaries and deep in the regimental area. The battalion commander defined the procedure for utilizing the TOE and attached weapons and also organized fire coordination between the companies and adjacent units. The total depth of the fire plan for a rifle division at Kursk reached 15 km, while at Stalingrad it did not exceed 8 km. A portion of the artillery from the rifle divisions was used according to the plan of a front (army) for participating in artillery counterbombardment. The necessary ammunition supplies were created at the firing positions.

In the battle on the Kursk Salient, antitank defense became the basis for all troop defense. This was organized considering combat experience acquired in the battles at Moscow and Stalingrad, considering the quantitative and qualitative growth of the antitank weapons as well as the massed use of tanks by the enemy. It was characterized by a deep echeloning of the antitank weapons, a larger portion of which was used for fighting for the main defensive zone and was massed on the likely tank approaches.

The main thing in antitank defense was the firing of weapons of the antitank strongpoints (PTOP) and areas combined with the massed artillery fire from

indirect fire positions and by man-made obstacles. The PTOP were usually combined with the company defensive areas and this provided the more effective use of all weapons in combat. The typical composition of a PTOP included 4-6 guns, 6-9 antitank rifles, 2-3 medium machine guns and 3-4 light machine guns. It also included submachine gunners and combat engineers with antitank mines. For the convenience of control and command, often two or three PTOP were combined into an antitank area. Deep in the defenses of the rifle formations, independent antitank areas were created, usually consisting of artillery subunits (see Diagram 5).

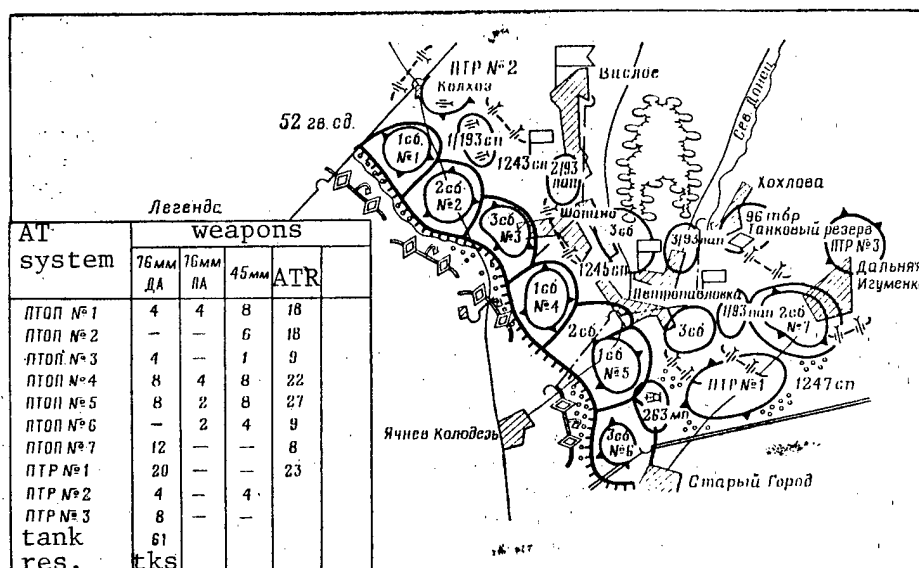


Diagram 5. Configuration of Antitank Defenses in the 375th Rifle Division on the Defensive at Kursk in July 1943.

All the artillery, including the howitzer, rocket and antiaircraft, was involved in hitting enemy tanks.¹⁰ For direct laying against the tanks, they employed the 122-mm and even 152-mm guns. A very effective means was the tanks and SAU positioned in the battalion defensive areas in special emplacements. Essential elements in antitank defense were the artillery antitank reserves, the mobile obstacle construction detachments and the man-made obstacles.¹¹

At Kursk air defense for the troops was also significantly improved. The basic groupings in the tactical zone were covered by army-level antiaircraft weapons and fighter aviation according to the plan of the army (front). For air observation in each rifle regiment a non-T/O post was established and in the divisions two posts using army equipment. In the aim of hitting enemy aircraft, the weapons of the rifle formations and units were widely employed. For example, in the 148th Rifle Division (commander, Maj Gen A. A. Mishchenko) from the XV Rifle Corps, 66 light machine guns and 27 medium ones, 65 antitank rifles and 7 76-mm field artillery pieces were prepared for firing at air targets.¹²

All of this helped to increase the effectiveness of troop air defense. Due to the high losses from ground weapons, the enemy aviation was forced to shift to operating at medium and high altitudes. As a result, its impact on the Soviet troops declined.

With the equipping of rifle troops with new combat equipment and the complicating of combat operations, coordination assumed particular significance. While in the first period of the war, this was usually organized for the lines, installations and variations of possible enemy actions, at Kursk a more effective method of cooperation was employed, that is, for combat tasks and probable directions of the enemy offensive.

All questions of cooperation were worked out on the terrain. The commanders of the cooperating units and subunits worked out in detail different variations of actions. Particular attention was given to ensuring the boundary lines and flanks. The combined placement of the command (observation) posts for the commanders of the all-arms and artillery units and formations also helped to achieve dependable cooperation. The reliability of cooperation was also achieved by the early preparation of control posts: one basic and one alternative command post and two observation posts in each rifle corps and division and one command post and one observation post for each regiment. The organizing of cooperation liaison also played an important role.

In the Battle of Kursk, the art of conducting defensive combat also rose to a higher level. The combat experience of the two previous years of the war was fully considered. In the aim of detecting the enemy's intentions, the direction of its main thrust and the time for going over to the offensive, continuous reconnaissance was conducted in the units and formations. Thus, the reconnaissance group from the 15th Rifle Division, in conducting a sweep, at 2330 hours on 4 July captured a combat engineer from the 6th German Infantry Division. He indicated that on 5 July at 0200 hours European time, the German troops would go over to the offensive in the general direction of Kursk.¹³

With the beginning of combat, the basic efforts of the rifle divisions were concentrated on destroying the attacking enemy and primarily its tanks, ahead of the forward edge and in the combat for the first position. Here the engineer works were skillfully employed.

With the driving of the Nazis into the first position, the Soviet subunits and units, in holding onto the flanks, intensified the firing against the enemy. In the event of the breaking through of the first line, the enemy encountered organized resistance in the second position from the second echelon battalions of the rifle regiments together with the subunits which had pulled back from the first position. The divisional reserves were also brought into the combat for this position. With the enemy breaking through to the third position, the second echelons of the rifle divisions were committed to battle. As the enemy advanced the resistance of the Soviet troops increased as men and weapons from the interior or from unattacked defensive areas were moved up to the threatened sector.

The Soviet troops put up fierce resistance to the enemy even in the event of encirclement. For example, as a result of strong strikes, the Nazis succeeded

in encircling the 676th Rifle Regiment from the 15th Rifle Division. The regimental commander, Lt Col N. N. Onopriyenko, precisely and continuously controlled the combat actions of the battalions. He skillfully maneuvered the men and weapons and by this effectively influenced the course of combat. In going over to an all-round defense, the regiment repelled all the fierce Nazi attacks. The regimental commander, receiving by radio instructions to pull out of the encirclement, organized a breakthrough. With the onset of darkness, the regiment's subunits with the support of artillery fire, fought their way out of the encirclement and went over to the defensive on the second line (see Diagram 6).¹⁴

The highest manifestation of activity in tactical defense was the counterattacks the aim of which was to recover the lost position of the defending troops. During the first period of the war, these were conducted in the divisions usually with weak forces and often under the conditions of a significant enemy superiority. For this reason, success was not always achieved. At Kursk a maximum number of men and weapons was employed for counterattacks and they were carefully prepared in firing, air defense, engineer and other terms. With enemy superiority, the second echelons of the rifle regiments, as a rule, were not involved in the counterattacks but with the antitank reserves and the mobile obstacle construction detachments of the divisions repelled the enemy strikes from the spot. The second echelons and reserves of the rifle divisions were used for counterattacks independently or together with the corps reserves. An example of this would be the counterattack by the second echelon of the 8th Rifle Division (commander, Col P. M. Gudz') from the XV Rifle Corps. At 1800 hours on 5 July, the Nazis had succeeded in breaking through the first position but their further advance had been stopped. The division commander decided to destroy the enemy which had broken through by making a counterattack. After a heavy artillery strike against the enemy by all the artillery, the division's second echelon (the 229th Rifle Regiment) in cooperation with the subunits from the first echelon regiments, rapidly attacked the enemy in the flank and as a result of this the Nazis were thrown back to the initial position.¹⁵

The second echelons of the rifle corps made counterattacks only when they had superiority in men and equipment over the enemy which had broken through. Ordinarily this was done after the breaking through of the second position and in the fight for the third position involving from 60 to 80 percent of the artillery and a large portion of the tanks. In a number of instances, the second echelons of the corps participated in the army (front) counterstrike.

A characteristic feature of the Battle of Kursk was the fact that all the men and weapons of the armies and fronts participated in the fight for the second defensive zone.¹⁶ This led to a sharp increase in the efforts of the Soviet troops in the tactical defensive zone.

In the course of the counterattacks, particular significance was given to choosing the moment for making the strike. The most favorable was considered to be a situation where the enemy first echelon suffered losses, its second echelon and reserves were a significant distance away and the artillery was changing firing positions. Significant forces of the rifle formations were usually involved in the counterattacks. Their success depended largely upon organization and all-round support.

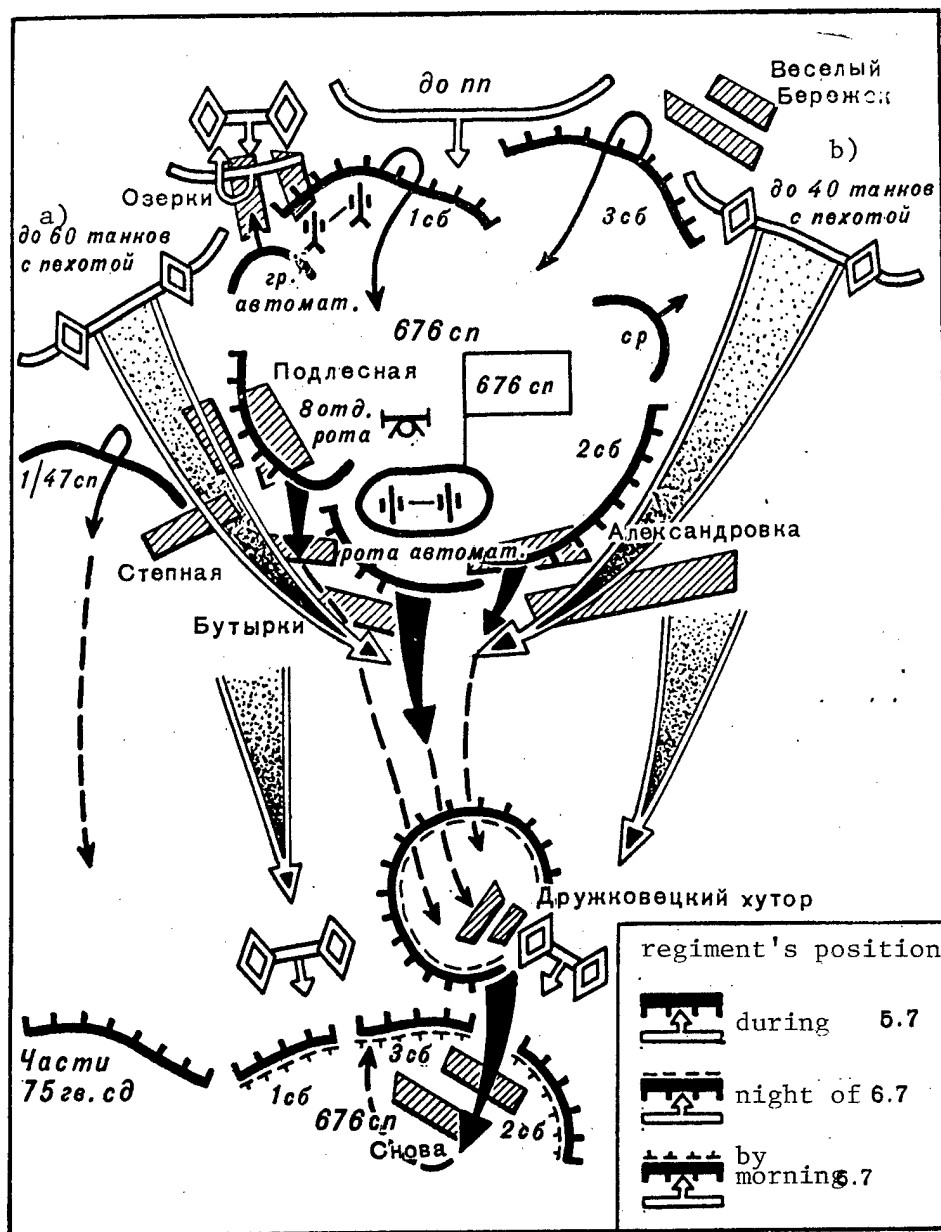


Diagram 6. Combat and Breaking Out of Encirclement of 676th Rifle Regiment

Key: a--Up to 60 tanks with infantry; b--Up to 40 tanks with infantry.

Strikes against the enemy flanks were the most effective and as a result of these conditions were created for encircling and destroying the enemy groupings which had broken in. All this ultimately led to a thwarting of the attempts by the Nazi Command to break through the defenses of the enemy troops at Kursk. This was aided by the fact that all the Soviet soldiers possessed high morale and they showed unprecedented tenacity and mass heroism. This was possible due

to the purposeful and effective party political work in the troops. It is difficult to overestimate the high level of troop field skills. Prior to the start of the Kursk Battle, the troops were trained under conditions as close as possible to a combat situation. Particular attention was given to the methods of combating heavy enemy tanks as well as to teaching the command personnel the methods of continuous control and command of the subunits and units in combat. The troops destined for maneuvering and counterattacks were systematically trained in carrying out the set tasks.

Thus, the development of defensive combat at Kursk occurred primarily in a direction of increasing the stability and activeness of the defense.

The stability of the defense was achieved by the stubborn resistance of the Soviet troops, by their deep echeloning and the massing of men and weapons in the most important sectors, by creating new elements of battle formations, by going over to a multiline defense with a high degree of its engineer equipping, by organizing an ordered fire plan and by a deeply echeloned antitank and dependable air defense.

The increased activity of the tactical defense was expressed in the higher art of planning and conducting counterattacks, in the maneuvering of men and equipment on the battlefield as well as in the involving of the artillery of the rifle formations in the artillery counterbombardment.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ For example, the headquarters of the XV Rifle Corps (commander, Maj Gen I. I. Lyudnikov) arrived in the 13th Army on 8 June and that of the XXIX Rifle Corps (commander, Gen A. N. Slyshkin) only on 29 June (TsAMO [Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense], folio 361, inv. 6079, file 177, sheets 111, 116).
- ² "Razvitiye taktiki Sovetskoy Armii v Gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny (1941-1945)" [The Development of Tactics in the Soviet Army During the Years of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945)], Voenizdat, 1958, p 281, Diagram 49.
- ³ Ibid., pp 291, 293, 294.
- ⁴ VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKOY ZHURNAL, No 6, 1976, p 22; "Razvitiye taktiki Sovetskoy...", p 282.
- ⁵ "Kurskaya bitva" [The Battle of Kursk], Voenizdat, 1970, p 59.
- ⁶ TsAMO, folio 361, inv. 6079, file 215, sheet 147.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid., file 181, sheet 134.
- ⁹ "Rasvitiye taktiki Sovetskoy...", pp 297, 298.

- ¹⁰ TsAMO, folio 361, inv. 8007, file 19, sheet 171.
- ¹¹ The development of antitank defense is described in detail in: VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 3, 1971, pp 32-44.
- ¹² TsAMO, folio 1206, inv. 44051, file 1, sheet 195.
- ¹³ Ibid., folio 361, inv. 6079, file 181, sheet 267.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., sheets 267-268.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., file 179, sheets 128-129.
- ¹⁶ For example, the command of the Voronezh Front during the night of 6 July moved up into the second defensive zone the 1st Tank Army, two separate tank corps, the 69th Army and the XXXV Guards Rifle Corps ("Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, p 151).

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EMPLOYMENT OF AVIATION IN KURSK BATTLE REVIEWED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 83 (signed to press 24 May 83) pp 45-54

[Article by Twice Hero of the Soviet Union, Mar Avn A. Yefimov, first deputy commander-in-chief of the air forces: "The Employment of Aviation in the Kursk Battle--An Important Stage in the Development of Operational Art of the Soviet Air Forces"]

[Text] The planning and organization of combat operations for the Soviet Air Forces in the Battle of Kursk were carried out in accord with that operational-strategic situation which had developed by the summer of 1943 in the central section of the Soviet-German Front.

In preparing for the offensive at Kursk, the Nazi Command undertook every measure to increase the combat capability of its aviation and to restore the initiative in the air which had gradually begun to shift to Soviet aviation. On the Soviet-German Front, from just 15 March through 1 July, 13 air groups¹ were shifted from Germany, France, Norway and Poland. Accelerated crew training was carried out at the training centers. In 1943, aircraft output, in comparison with 1942, increased by 1.7-fold. As a result the number of German aviation on the Soviet-German Front was almost fully restored.

Of the 2,980 aircraft which the Nazi Command and its allies possessed on the Soviet-German Front, more than 2,000 were to be used in the offensive operation on the Kursk Salient. Of these around a thousand aircraft of the 6th Air Army was based at airfields on the Orel Salient. The aviation of the 4th Air Fleet was in the areas of Kharkov and Poltava. Both air groups had over 1,000 bombers.² The air units were armed with modernized Henckel-111 bombers, Fokker-Wulf-190A fighters and Henschel-129 ground attack planes. The Nazi Command assured Hitler that the loss of operational air supremacy at Moscow and Stalin-grad was to be explained only by the difficult meteorological conditions of the Russian winter and that in the summertime the initiative would be recaptured by German aviation.

The Communist Party Central Committee and the Soviet government made every effort to implement major measures for further developing our nation's aviation industry. In 1943, in comparison with 1942, aircraft output increased by almost 9,500 aircraft including 8,200 combat ones. This made it possible to replenish the losses and increase the number of frontal [tactical] aviation and

long-range aviation. Series output commenced on the new Soviet fighters LA-5fn and YaK-9 with a 37-mm cannon and the IL-2 ground attack plane with a gunner compartment. The performance of the PE-2 divebomber was improved.

The air grouping involved in the defense of Kursk included the following air armies: the 16th (commander, Lt Gen Avn S. I. Rudenko) of the Central Front, the 2d (commander, Lt Gen Avn S. A. Krasovskiy) of the Voronezh Front and the 17th (commander, Lt Gen Avn V. A. Sudets) of the Southwestern Front as well as a portion of the long-range aviation forces. All in all this grouping numbered 2,950 aircraft. In addition, with the going of the Soviet troops over to a counteroffensive, they proposed using the 1st Air Army (commander, Lt Gen Avn M. M. Gromov), of the Western Front, the 15th Air Army (commander, Lt Gen Avn N. F. Naumenko) of the Bryansk Front and the 5th Air Army (commander, Lt Gen Avn S. K. Goryunov) of the Steppe Front.

The operations of the aviation field forces were coordinated by the air representatives of Hq SHC: the commander of the Air Forces of the Soviet Army, Mar Avn A. A. Novikov, and his deputies Col Gens Avn G. A. Vorozheykin and S. A. Khudyakov.

The Soviet Air Forces, both in the preparations and in the course of the Kursk Battle, widely employed the rich experience acquired in the battles of Moscow and Stalingrad and the air engagements over the Kuban.

During the period of preparation for the defensive engagement, our aviation carried out a number of important tasks: the winning of air supremacy, the combating of enemy operational moves, the protecting of troops against enemy air strikes, the conducting of air reconnaissance and so forth.

The struggle for air supremacy intensified not long before the start of the battle. In order to weaken the air grouping before the enemy troops went over to the offensive, the Hq SHC organized two major air operations to destroy the enemy aviation. The first was conducted from 6 through 8 May 1943 by the forces of six air armies (1st, 15th, 16th, 2d, 17th and 8th) on a front of 1,200 km. In the course of it the Soviet pilots made 1,400 aircraft sorties and knocked out over 500 enemy aircraft. Our losses were 122 aircraft.³ In terms of scope and the involved forces, this was the largest air operation since the start of the Great Patriotic War.

The second operation was carried out by the forces of three air armies (1st, 15th and 2d), and the long-range aviation from 8 through 10 June. As a result of four massed raids on 28 airfields and in air battles, around 250 aircraft were destroyed.⁴

The interdicting of rail movements and the disrupting of enemy motor traffic were a major task for the Soviet Air Forces in the preparatory period for the Kursk Battle. In accord with the instructions of Hq SHC, the command of the long-range aviation organized an air operation in the aim of disrupting the operation of the railroads and motor roads and to interdict the operational movement of Nazi troops. The long-range aviation formations struck the railroad junctions and stations, trains underway, bridges and other installations. The long-range bombers made 9,400 aircraft sorties, the depth of their

operations reached 450-600 km and the width of the area in which the strikes were made reached 350-400 km. Here the activeness of aviation operations increased constantly: in March it made 15 percent of the total number of aircraft sorties carried out in the name of disrupting the enemy shipments, 19.4 in April, 30.6 in May and 35 percent in June.⁵

At the same time, the enemy lines of communications were attacked by the formations and units of the 1st, 15th, 16th, 2d and 17th Air Armies as well as the 8th Air Army (commander, Lt Gen Avn T. T. Khryukin) of the Southern Front. The long-range bombers operated against rail installations predominantly deep in the rear, from 250 km and more from the front line, while the air armies operated in the zone near the front. The active operations of Soviet aviation against the enemy lines of communications led to great losses for the enemy. As a result, the enemy was forced to repeatedly move the date of the offensive.

The active struggle against the Nazi air force was not limited to just air operations. It was conducted daily by destroying enemy aviation in the air and on the airfields. Air engagement also occurred. Thus, on 2 June, in repelling a massed raid by 543 German aircraft against the Kursk railroad junction, 386 Soviet fighters of the frontal aviation and the National Air Defense Troops were involved.

The experience of repelling the massed raids showed the need for close cooperation and centralization of control over all the men and weapons involved in repelling the raids as well as a precise organization for a system of detecting the enemy aircraft in the air and warning our own fighters.

During the preparatory period, air reconnaissance was conducted intensely to detect the concentration areas of the main groupings of Nazi troops, the basing and composition of enemy aviation, the air defense system of the airfields, the nature of the defensive works, the location of strongpoints, artillery firing positions and the location of reserves. Already by the middle of May, over 900 enemy tanks were found to be concentrated in the area of Orel and Kromy, and over 580 aircraft at 16 airfields in this same sector.

Over the 3 months of preparations for the Battle of Kursk, the aviation of the fronts and the Headquarters reserve made more than 42,000 combat aircraft sorties in the central area of the front.⁶ The forces of the 6th and 4th German air fleets operating in the Kursk sector by the beginning of July 1943 had been significantly weakened.

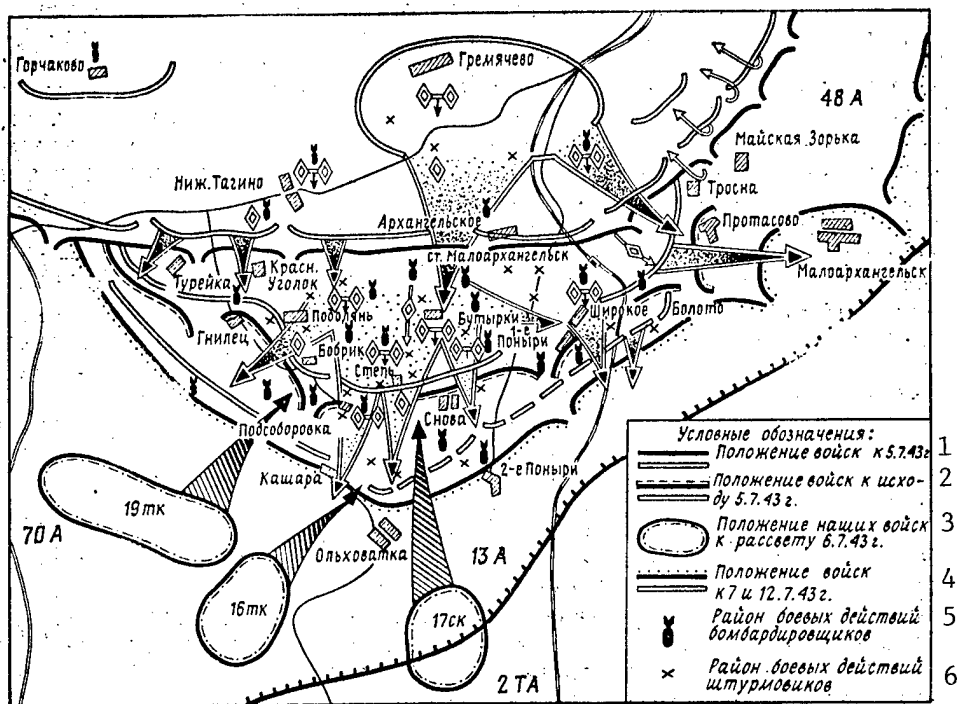
The measures carried out by Hq SHC to destroy enemy aviation at the airfields and in the air and to interdict rail and motor vehicle movements had a significant influence on the air and ground situation by the start of the Kursk Battle.

In line with the fact that the troops of the fronts were preparing not only for a defensive engagement but also for the subsequent going over to a counter-offensive, the units and facilities of the aviation service rear of the air armies created spare materiel for 10-15 days of combat operations. An airfield network was built, airfield maneuvering was planned for the event of the retreat of the Soviet forces during the defensive period as well as in going over to the

counteroffensive. Over the 3 months the airfield engineer battalions of the 16th and 2d Air Armies, with active aid from the local population, built and rebuilt 154 airfields.

The Soviet Air Forces acquired rich experience in organizing the camouflage of aviation basing by widely building dummy airfields. In both air armies, 50 such airfields were built and these subsequently were attacked by the enemy.⁷

In the course of the defensive engagements, for winning operational air supremacy, our basic fighter forces were involved. Fierce group air battles were waged over two narrow sections of the front with a total length of up to 100 km and where up to 5,000 aircraft were concentrated on both sides. Just on the first day there were 175 air battles in which 279 enemy aircraft were downed. There were episodes when up to 200-250 fighters were conducting combat operations in the air. As a total over the 2 weeks, there were around 1,000 air battles in which the Nazi aviation lost more than 1,400 aircraft.⁸



Combat Operations of Troops and Aviation
in Defensive Engagement on the Orel-Kursk Sector (5-10 July 1943)

Key: 1--Position of troops by 5 July 1943; 2--Position of troops by end of 5 July 1943; 3--Position of our troops by dawn 6 July 1943; 4--Position of troops by 7 and 12 July 1943; 5--Area of bomber combat operation; 6--Area of ground attack plane combat operations.

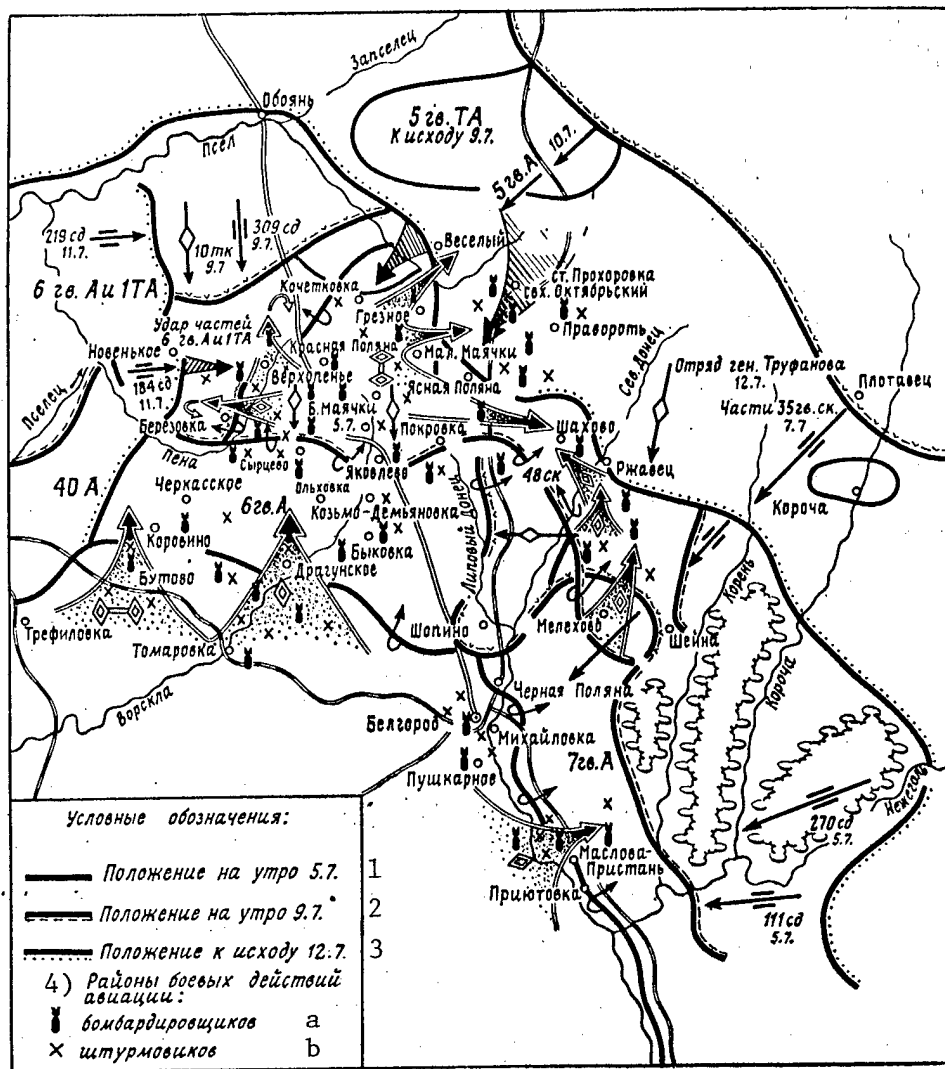
The Soviet pilots showed valor and high combat skill. Particularly distinguishing themselves were Jr Lt V. K. Polyakov who destroyed one aircraft by machine gun and cannon fire and rammed a second and Lt S. K. Kolesnichenko who in the first day of battle won three victories. On 6 July 1943, the pilot A. K. Gorovets committed an immortal feat. In one air battle he shot down nine enemy bombers. This was the only instance in the world. A. K. Gorovets was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

At the same time, in the first 4 days of the defensive operations, the Soviet Air Forces were unable to win operational air supremacy. The enemy, having concentrated large forces of bomber and fighter aviation on individual narrow sectors of the front, was able to make a number of massed raids against the defending troops and important rear installations. A number of serious shortcomings were detected in the operations of our aviation and these were analyzed in a directive from the chief of staff of the Soviet Army Air Forces of 29 July 1943. In particular, it stated: "There were instances when our fighters were not in those zones where the situation required and they operated passively. Repeatedly individual officers operating the guidance radios did not carry out their tasks. In terms of their operational-tactical training and experience they were unable to correctly and rapidly judge the air situation and control air combat under the conditions of a sharply changing situation. The staffs... were not always able to acquire rapid and accurate information, and as a consequence of this were not always true command bodies...."⁹

As a result of the adopting of energetic measures by the command and staffs of the 16th, 2d and 17th Air Armies, the detected shortcomings were eliminated. Basic attention was given to moving the patrol zones beyond the front line and to improving fighter control. The commanders of the fighter air corps and divisions were sent into the troop cover areas where they personally organized fighter control and guidance. The fighter pilots were given the mission of destroying bombers first of all, not allowing them to reach our troops' battle formations and to deprive the enemy of the possibility of pinpoint bombing. On 8 July the Soviet aviation won operational air supremacy on the Orel-Kursk sector and on 9 July on the Belgorod-Kharkov one. Nazi aviation sharply reduced its activity. While on 5 and 6 July it had made 5,000-6,000 aircraft sortie daily, from 9-10 July their number declined to 2,500-3,000. Having seized initiative in the air, our aviation by massed raids against the enemy to a significant degree aided the Central and Voronezh Fronts in bleeding the enemy white and in creating favorable conditions for the subsequent counteroffensive.

Over the period of the defense at Kursk, the Soviet Air Forces made more than 28,000 aircraft sorties and caused the enemy great losses in tanks, weapons and personnel. Nazi aviation lost more than 1,500 aircraft in air battles and at airfields.¹⁰

In the course of the defensive operation, the operational art of the air forces was enriched with new major ideas. Thus, planning the combat employment of air armies was carried out according to several versions which corresponded to the assumed versions of conducting the defensive operations. Each expected direction of the main enemy thrust was viewed as an individual version for the employment of the troops and aviation on the defensive. For example, in the defensive operations of the Central and Voronezh Fronts, the combat operations of



Combat Operations of Troops and Aviation in Defensive Engagement on Belgorod-Kursk Sector (6-17 July 1943)

Key: 1--Position on morning of 5 July; 2--Position on morning of 9 July; 3--Position by end of 12 July; 4--Areas of air combat operations: a--Bombers; b--Ground attack planes.

the 16th and 2d Air Armies were planned according to four versions of which the Glazunov-Budanov and Belgorod-Oboyan sectors were viewed as the most probable. Such planning proved fully effective.

For the first time in the defense at Kursk, air counterpreparations were planned. These were to be carried out by making massed raids by the bomber and ground attack aviation against the troops of the main enemy groupings preparing for the offensive.

Close coordination was organized between the air armies and the all-arms and tank armies and the individual tank corps as well as between the adjacent air armies. The cooperation plans were worked out according to the variations of troop actions on the defensive. The command posts and the auxiliary control posts of the air armies were deployed next to the command posts of the commanders of the fronts and armies and air representatives were sent out to the command posts of the all-arms formations.

Also undergoing further development was one of the basic principles in the combat employment of aviation, namely the concentrating of the main forces on the crucial sectors. Thus, in the fight against the Orel enemy grouping, over 90 percent of the aircraft sorties were made over the main Olkhovatka sector.

The experience of Soviet aviation's combat operations in the course of the defensive engagement was widely employed in the counteroffensive. The Soviet Supreme High Command for the counteroffensive planned to employ five air armies (1st, 2d, 5th, 15th and 16th) reinforced by 18 air corps of the RVGK [Reserve of Supreme High Command] and significant long-range aviation forces, a total of over 5,000 aircraft.¹¹ The Nazi Command also increased its aviation forces in the aim of recovering the lost initiative in the air over the Orel and Belgorod-Kharkov sectors. New air units were shifted here from Germany and from other sectors of the Soviet-German Front and a powerful grouping numbering around 2,200 aircraft was set up.

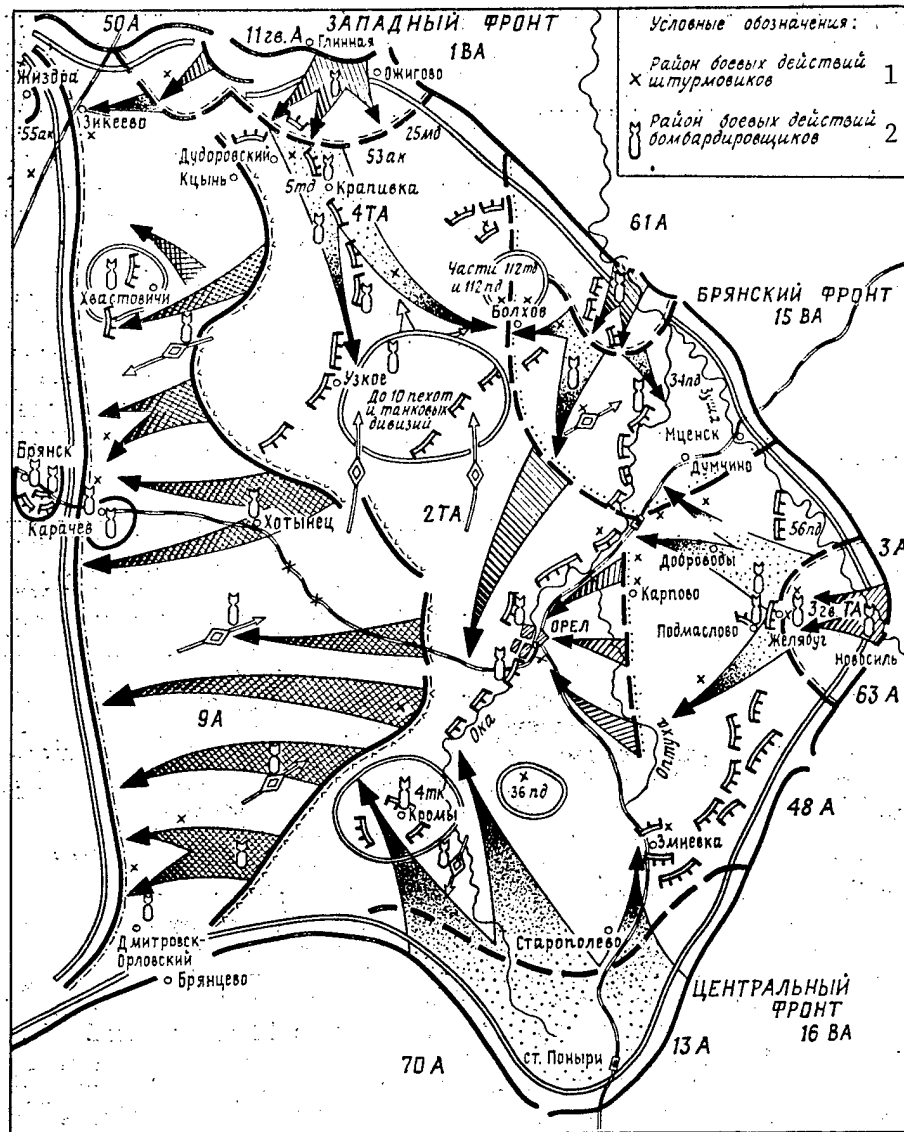
In the counteroffensive, the Soviet Air Forces were given the tasks of firmly maintaining air supremacy, of supporting and dependably covering the assault groupings of the fronts in breaking through the enemy defenses and developing the success in the operational depth, in opposing the Nazi troops in occupying the defensive on intermediate lines, of disrupting control as well as preventing the maneuvering of enemy reserves and the conducting of air reconnaissance.

In the aim of reducing the time for attacking the enemy and for ensuring a dependable troop cover, the fighters were based 15-50 km from the frontline, the ground attack planes were 30-75 km and the bombers were 75-200 km. The long-range aviation struck the enemy from permanent rear airfields.

In the counteroffensive at Kursk, a significantly larger number of aviation forces was involved than in the counteroffensive at Moscow and Stalingrad. While in the counteroffensive at Moscow (from 5 through 25 December 1941), our aviation made 10,150 aircraft sorties, at Stalingrad (from 19 November 1942 through 2 February 1943) there were 35,929 sorties, in the counteroffensive at Kursk (from 12 July through 23 August 1943) there were around 89,300 aircraft sorties.

In the fight for air supremacy, the Soviet Air Forces destroyed enemy aviation in the air and at airfields, they neutralized the air control posts, knocked out airfield/runways and destroyed dumps of aviation fuel, ammunition and other supplies. As experience showed, the most important task was to destroy the aviation in the air and at the airfields.

In the counteroffensive at Kursk, for the first time in the Great Patriotic War, an air offensive was actually carried out fully. Since this time it began to be



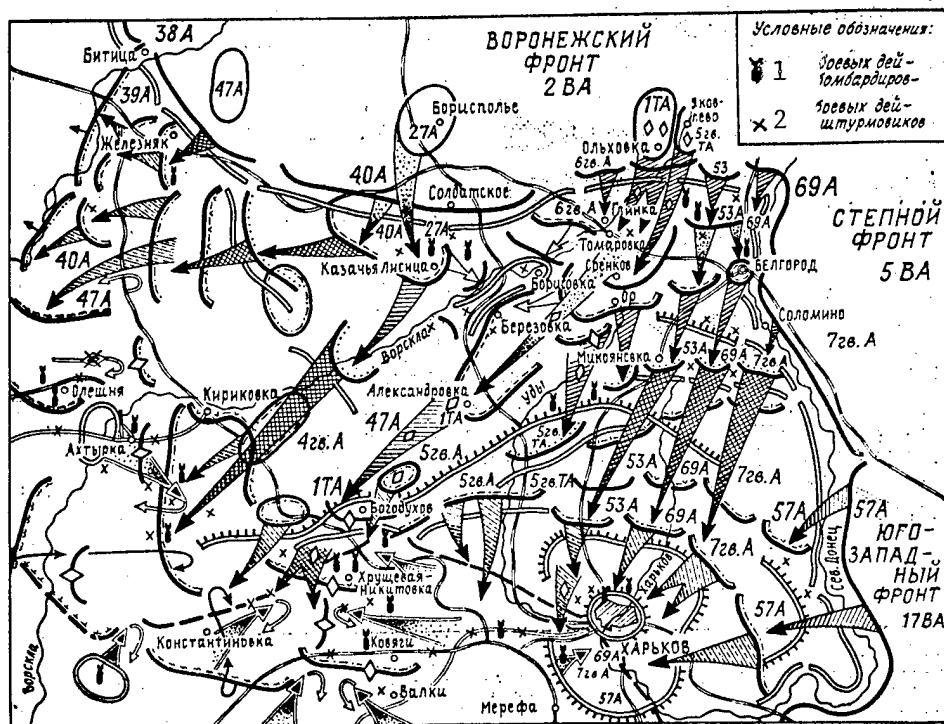
**Combat Operations of Troops and Aviation
in Operation to Defeat Enemy Orel Grouping (12 July-17 August 1943)**

Key: 1--Area of ground attack plane operation; 2--Area of bomber combat operations.

conducted to the entire depth of the army and front offensive operations. This included all the missions performed by the air army in the offensive operation and the volume and nature of these missions were defined by the commander of the front.

During the committing of the tank field forces and formations to battle, the efforts of the air armies were aimed at neutralizing the enemy antitank defense weapons, at isolating the area of the battle from the approach of reserves and at covering the tank and mechanized corps against air strikes. From 50 to 80

In the course of the counteroffensive, the theory and practice of combating enemy reserves underwent further development, particularly in the Belgorod-Kharkov sector. Considering the experience of these operations, during the preparatory period, attacks were made successively by the 8th Air Army and then the 17th, 5th and 2d Air Armies as well as by the long-range aviation against the enemy tank formations moving up from the Donets Basin into the area of Kharkov. In the course of the air operation, from 4 through 12 August, the Soviet Air Forces made more than 7,100 aircraft sorties and prevented the planned concentration of enemy reserves, thereby making it easier for the troops of the Voronezh Front to repel the counterstrikes and finally defeat the enemy.



Key: 1--Area of bomber combat operations; 2--Area of ground attack plane operations.

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began to be located close to the observation posts of the commanders of the all-arms armies. Air representatives were sent into the rifle corps and divisions in order to ensure close cooperation between the ground attack planes and the troops. In order to ensure precise air control, several radio networks were organized, including a separate radio network for guiding the ground attack aviation.

In the Battle at Kursk, the tactics of the branches of aviation underwent further development. Fighter aviation, as in the previous operations, was the basic means for winning air supremacy. In fierce battles against Nazi aviation, the fighters conducted air battles in battle formations which were deployed in depth and altitude and, as a rule, employing a vertical maneuver.

For the first time, the ground attack and bomber aviation began using hollow-charge bombs for combating tanks and other armored equipment. The ground attack planes and bombers skillfully combined different methods of combat operations (echeloned operations in small groups, concentrated and massed raids by major aviation forces). The frontal bomber aviation mastered the method of group divebombing.

In the Battle of Kursk, one could note tendencies toward a broader massing of the aviation forces in the main operational sectors of the ground forces, and of the further development of a system of aviation control over the battlefield by equipping the control posts with radar and communications. Numerous air engagements still showed the necessity of centralizing control over the men and weapons participating in repelling massed enemy air raids. In attacking airfields and other installations, as never before, the need was apparent of assigning special groups for neutralizing the air defenses of these installations and so forth.

During the defensive period and in the course of the counteroffensive at Kursk, the Soviet pilots made more than 116,000 aircraft sorties. Over 3,700 enemy aircraft were destroyed in air battles and at airfields.¹²

The victory of the Soviet Air Forces in the Battle of Kursk was won due to the high moral-combat qualities of the flight personnel and the commanders and which had been formed as a result of the enormous and diverse activities by the command, the political bodies, the party and Komsomol organizations. Party political work was conducted in the air force units the more actively the more complex and the more intense the combat situation. It was closely linked to the concrete tasks confronting Soviet aviation and was marked by purposefulness, flexibility and high effectiveness.

For successfully carrying out the combat missions of the command, many air formations and units were awarded orders, they were turned into guards units and received the names Belgorod, Orel and Kharkov. Thousands of aviators were commended with high decorations of the motherland and many received the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

The rich combat experience acquired by the Soviet flyers in the fierce battles against Nazi aviation over the Kursk Salient was an invaluable contribution to the operational art of the Soviet Air Forces. In firmly keeping the strategic

air supremacy, our Air Forces had an ever-growing effect on the successful carrying out of operations by the Soviet Armed Forces. The acquired experience is presently being widely employed in working out the fundamental questions of air force operational art.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ An air group as an average had 30 aircraft.
- ² "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, Voenizdat, 1976, p 143.
- ³ TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], Vol 35, inv. 226133, file 1, sheet 67; "Sovetskiye Voenno-Vozdushnyye Sili v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945 gg." [The Soviet Air Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Voenizdat, 1968, pp 175, 176.
- ⁴ "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 7, p 130.
- ⁵ I. V. Timokhovich, "Operativnoye iskusstvo Sovetskikh VVS v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne" [Operational Art of the Soviet Air Forces in the Great Patriotic War], Voenizdat, 1976, p 254.
- ⁶ "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 7, p 133.
- ⁷ TsAMO, folio 368, inv. 15035, file 1, sheet 317; folio 302, inv. 20671, file 2, sheet 110.
- ⁸ I. V. Timokhovich, op. cit., p 48.
- ⁹ TsAMO, folio 346, inv. 138741, file 2, sheets 130-131.
- ¹⁰ I. V. Timokhovich, op. cit., p 50.
- ¹¹ "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 7, p 158.
- ¹² "Sovetskiye Voenno-Vozdushnyye...", pp 186, 194, 197.

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DEVELOPMENT OF AIR DEFENSE IN KURSK BATTLE TRACED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 83 (signed to press 24 May 83) pp 55-62

[Article by Col Gen Art A. Smirnov, deputy commander-in-chief of the Air Defense Troops: "Characteristic Traits of Operational Art for the National Air Defense Troops in the Kursk Battle"]

[Text] In the spring of 1943, the Nazi Command concentrated a powerful air grouping in the region of the Kursk Salient for supporting the Army Groups Center and South in the "Citadel" Offensive Operation. Over 2,000 aircraft were concentrated at the airfields in the regions of Orel, Belgorod and Kharkov, and this was over 65 percent of the enemy aircraft fleet operating in that period on the Soviet-German Front.¹

One of the basic tasks of the created air grouping, according to the plans of the Nazi Command, was to disrupt the lines of communications and above all the rail lines over which troops and supplies of the Central and Voronezh Fronts were moved, in order to isolate the troops of these fronts from the rear of the nation, to prevent their reinforcing and thereby create favorable conditions for an offensive by the German ground troops. For this reason the organization of dependable air defense in the region of the Kursk Salient was a problem of prime significance.

In accord with the task set by Hq SHC, the command of the National Air Defense Troops promptly took measures to reinforce the air defenses over the lines of communications and installations of the front rear in the area of the Kursk Salient. Even in February 1943, air defense units began arriving here from other air defense field forces and formations, including from the Moscow Air Defense Front, the Transcaucasian Air Defense Zone and the Kuybyshev Air Defense Region. In February of the same year, the Moscow Air Defense Front organized a new headquarters of the Kharkov Divisional Air Defense Region and the newly formed 310th Air Defense Fighter Air Division became part of this. A regrouping was carried out in the air defense formations and units covering the installations of the Kursk Salient. In the aim of improving control over subordinate units, the staff and headquarters of the Voronezh-Borisoglebsk Divisional Air Defense Region in February 1943 was moved from Borisoglebsk to Voronezh.

Due to the measures undertaken by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet government to improve the quality of weapons and combat equipment, the National Air Defense Troops received new LA-5 fighter aircraft which surpassed for a number of indicators the FW-190 and ME-109 Nazi fighters; the antiaircraft artillery units continued to be rearmed with more advanced 85-mm cannons and the number of detection and guidance radars as well as gun-laying radars increased; the antiaircraft machine gun units were completely rearmed with the large-caliber DShK machine guns.

As a result, the Soviet Command in the spring of 1943 had concentrated significant forces of the National Air Defense Troops in the region of the Kursk Salient for the air defense of the installations of the front rear and the reserves. These included: the Ryazhsk-Tambov, Voronezh-Borisoglebsk, Kharkov and Tula divisional air defense regions. Since it was felt (and this had been confirmed by the 2-year experience of the war) that it was impossible to successfully defend one or another large installation by just ground weapons, each air defense region in operational terms was assigned one air defense fighter division. Here the coverage density for the rail sections by fighter aviation, depending upon their importance, was 12-46 aircraft per kilometer of track (see Table 1).

Table 1

Coverage Density by Fighter Aviation for Rail Sections
of Kursk Salient

Formation of Air Defense Fighters	Total length of track covered by air defense fighters, in km	Number of Air Defense Fighters	
		Total	Per 100 km of track
36th iad [Fighter Air Division] of Ryazhsk-Tambov Divisional Air Defense Region	250	29	12
101st iad of Voronezh-Borisogl Divisional Air Defense Region	582	69	12
125th iad of Tula Divisional Air Defense Region	140	40	28
310th iad of Kharkov Divisional Air Defense Region	150	70	46
Total:	1,122	208	98

The basic efforts of the nation's air defense ground weapons were concentrated on covering the rail junctions, stations and bridges (see Table 2).

A strong air defense for the fronts was also organized ahead of time. Hq SHC, just for covering the troops of the Central and Voronezh Fronts, concentrated

9 antiaircraft artillery divisions of the RBGK [Reserve of Supreme High Command] and 33 separate medium- and small-caliber antiaircraft artillery units which included 1,026 antiaircraft guns and 1,028 antiaircraft machine guns.² Significant forces of fighter aviation also existed for combating enemy aviation in the 16th and 2d Air Armies of these fronts.

Table 2

Distribution of Air Defense Ground Weapons by Types
of Rail Installations in Kursk Salient

Name of Weapons	Total No.		Including for Air Defense of					
	No.	%	Rail Junctions		Rail Stations		Rail Bridges	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Medium-caliber antiaircraft weapons . . .	547	100	368	67	74	13	76	14
Small-caliber antiaircraft weapons . . .	214	100	112	52	36	17	52	24
Antiaircraft machine guns .	558	100	255	45	159	28	116	20
Searchlights . .	125	100	125	100	--	--	--	--

Air defense for the installations and rail lines in the Kursk Salient was organized proceeding from the assumed nature of enemy air operations in this sector, the importance of the defended installations and the particular features of their placement within each air defense formation. Up to one-third of the fighters (69 aircraft) were deployed at airfields along the Kastornoye--Kursk mainline. Additional airfields and runways were built for ensuring the maneuvering of these planes. Provision was also made for maneuvering the fighter air units along the front and in depth. Strong groupings of medium-caliber antiaircraft artillery were created not only for the air defense of Kursk and Kastornoye but also for covering important rail junctions such as Tula, Ryazhsk, Yelets, Gryazi, Voronezh, Liski and Valuyki. The airfields, field front dumps and army depots, loading stations, sidings, bridges, depots and other small installations in a majority of instances were defended by small-caliber antiaircraft artillery and by antiaircraft machine guns.

The air observation, warning and communications (VNOS) service of the air defense regions was based on the visual observation posts which maintained direct contact with the VNOS posts of the fronts. There were also radars which, along with enemy air reconnaissance, were used for guiding the fighters. Data on the air enemy were transmitted to radio and telephone lines from the main VNOS posts of the air defense regions to the airfields of the air defense fighters and the air armies of the fronts.

Enemy air raids against the lines of communications in the Kursk Salient started on 1 March. Right up until the second half of May, these were made basically in small groups, predominantly in daylight. The objectives of the raids were chiefly the large rail junctions, stations, crossings and bridges on lateral rail lines. Enemy aviation operated in an area over 500 km along the front and up to 250-350 km in depth.

Due to the fact that the operations of the small aviation groups were unsuccessful, at the end of May and the beginning of June, the Nazi Command undertook massed raids against the Kursk rail junction. In the first of them (22 May 1943), around 170 bombers participated.³ As a result the units of the Voronezh-Borisoglebsk Air Defense Region together with the air defense fighter aviation, the fighter aviation of the air armies and the organic air defense repelled the raid. Here 65 enemy aircraft, or around 40 percent of the total number, were destroyed.⁴ Regardless of the high losses, Nazi aviation on 2 June and the night of 3 June again subjected the city and the junction of Kursk to massed raids. The enemy employed 543 aircraft, including 424 bombers, in the daylight raid which started at dawn on 2 June.⁵ The raid was made in five waves from several directions and different altitudes and lasted 10 hours. During the night of 3 June, enemy aviation made a massed raid against Kursk with forces of up to 300 bombers, having employed the tactics of so-called star raids.

For repelling the daytime raid, around 390 fighters were used from the 101st Air Defense Fighter Division, the 16th and 2d Air Armies of the fronts as well as the antiaircraft artillery and machine guns from the Kursk operations group of the Voronezh-Borisoglebsk Air Defense Region and the organic air defense of the Central and Voronezh Fronts. Moreover, in the aim of increasing the force of the strike, regiments from the 102d Air Defense Fighter Division were shifted from Voronezh and Kastornoye. The enemy lost 145 aircraft on just 2 June.⁶ The nighttime raid also did not bring the expected results. The Kursk rail junction 12 hours after the raid resumed operations. In suffering high losses, the enemy was forced to abandon the massed employment of aviation in the region of the Kursk Salient. The raids continued until the end of June but were now made in small groups. The massed air raid against Kursk on 2 June became the last major daylight raid against installations of the Soviet rear during the years of the Great Patriotic War.

In repelling the enemy air raids of 2 June, the pilots of the air defense fighter aviation Hero of the Soviet Union Maj V. F. Bashkir, Capts P. P. Kalyuzhnyy and B. Ya. Ternovoy, Sr Lt M. P. Starzhinskiy, Lt A. A. Yeldyshev, Sgt S. G. Yakovenko and others fought courageously and steadfastly and each of them shot down several enemy aircraft. The antiaircraft gunners also skillfully routed the enemy. Thus, the 254th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment in 24 hours destroyed 22 enemy aircraft. In this battle, the batteries under the command of Sr Lt S. Z. Vishnyakov and Lt P. A. Kalinichenkov distinguished themselves.

With the start of the defensive engagement, enemy aviation shifted efforts to supporting the ground troops. The intensity of its operations against the lines of communications declined and came down basically to raids by small groups and individual aircraft on troop trains on the move.

In the course of the counteroffensive, our air force won operational and then strategic air supremacy. Certain units of the National Air Defense Troops moved up behind the advancing troops to cover important installations on liberated territory. But the basic forces as before covered the railroads, the reserves and also the installations of the front rear against air strikes.

The main result of the combat activities of the National Air Defense Troops during the Kursk Battle was the fact that the enemy did not succeed in making air strikes to disrupt the operational regroupings and the supplying of the troops of our fronts or have any serious impact on changing the operational-strategic situation in its favor.

The motherland had high praise for the contribution of the air defense troops to achieving victory over the enemy. The 487th and 910th Fighter Air Regiments became guards units. The 183d and 254th Antiaircraft Artillery Regiments, the 7th Antiaircraft Machine Gun Regiment and the 55th Antiaircraft Armored Train were awarded the Order of the Red Banner while the 29th Separate VNOS Battalion received the Red Star. The combat feats of the air defense soldiers were recognized by USSR orders and medals.

In the employment of the Air Defense Troops in the Kursk Battle there were a number of characteristic features and traits which derived from the situational conditions and the nature of enemy air operations (see Table 3).

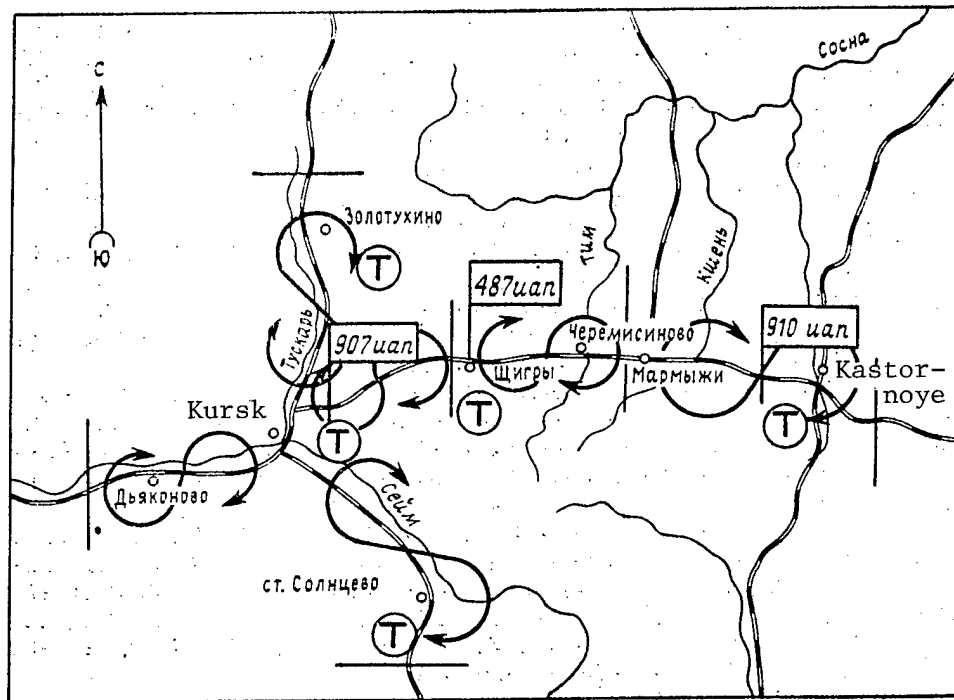
Table 3

Data on the Enemy Air Operations in the Spring and Summer of 1943
Against Rail and Other Installations in the Kursk Salient

Months	Total No. of Aircraft Flights	Counted in Raids Against:					
		Rail Junctions	Rail Stations	Rail Crossings	Rail Bridges	Airfields	Other Installations
Feb	15	5	10	--	--	--	--
Mar	739	710	27	--	--	--	2
Apr	695	238	95	209	34	84	35
May	2,162	996	445	355	201	108	57
June	2,124	1,039	303	407	95	240	40
July	642	230	165	228	--	16	3
Aug	300	138	63	99	--	--	--
Sep	234	80	30	118	1	2	3
Total	6,911	3,436	1,138	1,416	331	450	140
in %	100	50	17	19	5	7	2

First of all, it is essential to emphasize that the men and weapons of the National Air Defense Troops were unevenly distributed. The basic efforts were focused on protecting against air strikes the major rail junctions, primarily that of Kursk, as well as the Kastornoye--Kursk railroad which linked the nation's rear with the Central and Voronezh Fronts (see the diagram).

The air defense system in the region of the Kursk Salient in terms of its operational configuration was echeloned in depth and had a clearly expressed installation-zonal nature. Thus, in the employment of the air defense fighter aviation one could clearly see the abandoning of the point defense principle and the changing over to the organizing of cover for entire areas and sections of the lines of communications.



The Covering of Railroads on the Kursk Salient
by Air Defense Fighter Aviation (June 1943)

There were also characteristic features in troop command. Since several air defense regions were involved in carrying out the same tasks on different fronts, the command and staff of the National Air Defense Troops were directly concerned with the questions of coordination between them.

The control and command of the front's air defense resources were exercised by the commander of the front.

Command on the scale of the divisional air defense regions and the fighter air divisions operationally subordinate to them was also centralized. But, due to the fact that within each front air defense formation there was a large number of rail installations, in individual instances decentralization was allowed in the control of the air defense resources.

In the aim of increasing the effectiveness of control and providing closer interaction between the branches of troops of varying subordination, within the air defense regions operations groups were set up and these were placed close to the most important covered installations.

One of them was the Kursk Air Defense Operations Group. It directed the combat actions of a portion of the forces from the Voronezh-Borisoglebsk Divisional Air Defense Region and these were defending one of the important rail sections on the Kursk Salient: Kastornoye--Kursk. This group headed by the chief of staff of the air defense region, Col V. S. Gavrilov, had more than 200 medium- and small-caliber antiaircraft guns, over 100 large-caliber antiaircraft machine guns as well as antiaircraft searchlight subunits. Up to 70 fighters were assigned from the 101st Air Defense Fighter Division. Leadership over the Kursk operations group was provided by the commander of the divisional air defense region.

The chiefs of the operations groups and their staffs were in charge of direct control over the combat operations of the group's units and maintaining cooperation between the air defense units comprising them as well as with cooperating organic air defense units and the fighter aviation from the air armies of the fronts.

The principle of allocating zones of combat was used as the basis for cooperation. The fighter aviation from the air armies, in being based at forward airfields, attacked the enemy aircraft on the approaches to the front line. Then they were fired on by the antiaircraft batteries of organic air defense. The National Air Defense fighter aviation attacked the enemy aircraft at the distant and close approaches to the covered installations up to the zone of fire of the antiaircraft artillery and also pursued them on the way back.

Such an allocation by target, time and lines (zones) of the antiaircraft artillery and fighter aviation of differing subordination made it possible to use them with the greatest effectiveness. Destruction by enemy air forces of much valuable freight and rolling stock was prevented by joint effort.

The air defense fighter aviation was controlled from the command posts of the fighter air divisions (regiments) and these, as a rule, were located at the command posts of the air defense formations (units), and in the region of Kursk, directly at the command post of the Kursk Operations Group. The fighter aviation from the air armies was controlled from its own command posts.

Reciprocal information on the air situation was organized between the staffs of the air defense regions and the operations groups, on the one hand, and the staffs of the air armies and all-arms field forces on the other. This contributed to the prompt taking of measures to repel the enemy air raids. In the reconnaissance system, a major role was played by the radars of the national air defense regions.

A new feature in the employment of fighter aviation in covering railroads was the assigning of individual rail sections to fighter air regiments. The length of the section depended upon the range of tasks to be carried out, the number of combat-ready crews and the presence of airfields. Here it was considered that the crews would spend a minimum of time in flying to the defended section.

Depending upon the situational conditions, the railroad sections were covered by fighter alert duty at the airfields as well as by patrolling over the

defended sections of the railroad at the assumed time that enemy aircraft might appear. Air defense for the railroad sections and trains on the move by fighter aviation was very effective. Proof of this is the fact that none of the trains covered by fighters was hit by enemy air raids.

A characteristic trait of the employment of the National Air Defense Troops in the Kursk Battle was the broad maneuvering of air defense resources between the covered installations. An example of an effective maneuver could be the moving of the regiments of the 102d Fighter Air Division from Voronezh and Kastornoye to Kursk in the aim of more successfully repelling the massed enemy air raids undertaken against this rail junction on 2 and 3 June 1943.

In a number of instances, maneuvering was also caused by the necessity of defending previously uncovered rail installations, small loading stations, places where trains had accumulated because of the destruction of individual rail sections and so forth. For this purpose extensive use was made of maneuvering (roaming) antiaircraft artillery groups and antiaircraft armored trains. The maneuvering (roaming) antiaircraft artillery groups included medium- and small-caliber antiaircraft guns, antiaircraft machine guns and the necessary amount of transport. The firing positions were selected by them and taken up covertly, usually in darkness, on the most probable directions of an enemy air flight. After two or three firings, the maneuvering groups, according to a special schedule worked out by the staff of the air defense formation, under its own power moved to a new cover installation.

For the first time during the Great Patriotic War a significant number of antiaircraft armored trains was used to cover the rail lines of the Kursk Salient. Thus, while at Stalingrad there were just 8 of them, here their number reached 35. These were employed in the aim of reinforcing the air defenses of large rail junctions and bridges; for temporarily covering rail installations with a regrouping of the basic air defense resources; for organizing ambushes at intermediate stations, sidings and crossings where other air defense weapons were lacking, for escorting trains on the move. The antiaircraft armored trains also carried out independent tasks of defending individual rail stations and bridges. In maneuvering along the basic mainlines, they could shift quickly from one installation to another. The presence of medium- and small-caliber antiaircraft guns and antiaircraft machine guns made it possible for the armored trains to successfully combat individual and small groups of enemy aviation at medium and low altitudes.

The escorting of trains on the move was carried out by specially created air defense groups which included individual antiaircraft machine gun platoons and small-caliber antiaircraft guns. These were located on two-four flatcars or gondolas.

During the period of the counteroffensive, a portion of the men and weapons of the National Air Defense Troops moved up behind the advancing troops in the aim of eliminating the gap between the organic air defenses and the National Air Defense Troops and to promptly cover installations on the liberated territory.

The maneuvering nature of air defenses in the Kursk Battle gave it flexibility and increased its stability.

Thus, the organization of air defense was based upon the principles tested out at Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad: the creation of an installation-zonal defense within the boundaries of the air defense regions, the massing of men and weapons in the main sectors and at the most important installations, their all-round defense, the broad maneuvering of air defense resources in the aim of the necessary reinforcing of individual installations (sections of lines of communications) in a specifically developing situation and close cooperation with the fighter aviation of air armies and organic air defense.

The combat experience acquired in the Battle of Kursk in organizing and conducting air defense for rail lines of communications and installations of the front rear was an important contribution to the development of operational art and tactics for the National Air Defense Troops. This was used in conducting subsequent operations, since the rail junctions, stations and bridges up to the war's end were one of the basic objects of attack for the air enemy.

FOOTNOTES

¹ "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 7, Voenizdat, 1976, p 143.

² Ibid., Vol 7, p 138; VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 4, 1978, pp 28-29.

³ "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 7, p 131.

⁴ "Voyska protivovozdushnoy oborony strany. Istoricheskiy ocherk" [National Air Defense Troops. Historical Essay], Voenizdat, 1968, pp 237, 238.

⁵ "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 7, p 131.

⁶ Ibid.

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ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS ON PREPARATION FOR KURSK BATTLE PRESENTED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 83 (signed to press 24 May 83) pp 63-71

[Official documents prepared by Maj Gen V. Gurkin: "Preparations for the Kursk Battle"]

[Text] After the conclusion of the winter engagements at the end of March 1943, Hq SHC and the General Staff began to work out a plan for the conducting of military operations in the summer of 1943. Even at the beginning of April, the General Staff, upon instructions from Hq SHC, issued instructions to the fronts in order to utilize the time of the spring muddy season for better organizing defenses and creating reserves in the basic sectors (see Document 1).

In endeavoring to guess the enemy's intentions, the Supreme High Command demanded that the commands of the fronts pay most serious attention to organizing all types of reconnaissance (see Document 2). As a result of studying the intelligence data, it was established that the enemy was regrouping its troops and concentrating them in the Kursk sector. On the basis of an analysis of these data and a repeated discussion at the GKO [State Defense Committee], Headquarters and the General Staff abandoned the initial plan to commence the summer campaign with an offensive.

On 8 April, the Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief G. K. Zhukov who at this time was with the troops on the Voronezh Front, sent the Supreme Commander-in-Chief a convincing report which had been approved by the Chief of the General Staff A. M. Vasilevskiy with an assessment of the situation. This report set out the considerations for a plan of action in the region of the Kursk Salient.¹

Having become acquainted with the proposals of G. K. Zhukov, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief I. V. Stalin issued instructions to seek the opinion of the fronts and this was done by the General Staff (see Document 3). The Staff of the Central Front and the Military Council of the Voronezh Front immediately submitted their ideas (see Documents 4 and 5).

After obtaining reliable data on the enemy's intention to initiate a major offensive in the area of the Kursk Salient, Hq SHC made a final decision to go over to an intentional defense in this region in order in the course of the defensive engagement to weaken the enemy assault groupings in the region of Orel

and Belgorod and then go over to a counteroffensive. In accord with this instructions were issued to reinforce the troops of the Central and Voronezh Fronts, to organize the Steppe Military District, to build defensive lines and to prevent the moving of enemy troops into the region of the Kursk Salient (see Documents 6-9, 11, 18).

Hq SHC also carefully followed the change in the time that the enemy was to go over to the offensive (this was changed three times by Hitler) and promptly issued the corresponding orders (see Documents 10, 12, 13, 17). On the basis of this the fronts issued the necessary instructions to the troops (see Documents 14, 15) and this made it possible to meet the expected strike in full readiness.

The measures carried out by Hq SHC and the General Staff played a major role in the preparation for and execution of the defensive engagement at Kursk as well as in defeating the Nazi troops in the course of the counteroffensive.

Document 1

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF 2 APRIL 1943 TO THE COMMANDERS OF THE FRONTS AND INDIVIDUAL ARMIES

The period of the spring muddy season is to be used for better organizing the defenses of the occupied lines, particularly the antitank defenses, for developing defensive works and creating reserves in the basic sectors as well as for combat training of the troops.

The training should be based on a practical study of the field manual, the combat field manual and the orders of the NKO [People's Commissariat of Defense] No 306 and 325...

Vasilevskiy

(TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 3, inv. 11556, file 12, sheet 333)

Document 2

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF 3 APRIL 1943 TO THE COMMANDERS OF THE FRONTS AND THE 7TH SEPARATE ARMY

In line with the spring muddy season and the lull in major battles on the front in a larger number of the armies, there has been a significant decline in the receipt of data from troop reconnaissance. As a result of this, the regroupings being carried out by the enemy in a number of instances have remained unnoticed.

I ask you to now pay the most serious attention to all types of reconnaissance and without fail to take prisoners in order to constantly follow all the changes in the enemy grouping and to promptly determine the sectors in which the enemy is concentrating its troops and particularly its tank units....

Vasilevskiy

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 12, sheet 343)

Document 3

DIRECTIVE OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF 10 APRIL 1943 TO THE COMMANDERS OF THE FRONTS

I request that by 12 April 1943 you submit your estimate of the opposing enemy and the possible directions of its actions.

Antonov

(TsAMO, folio 48-A, inv. 1691, file 14, sheet 132)

Document 4

FROM THE REPORT OF THE STAFF OF THE CENTRAL FRONT OF 10 APRIL 1943 TO THE CHIEF OF THE OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE OF THE GENERAL STAFF WITH AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ENEMY AND THE NATURE OF ITS POSSIBLE ACTION

I report data on the enemy in front of the troops of the Central Front as of 10 April 1943 and the probable nature of its actions during the spring and summer period of 1943.

1. The enemy troop grouping on 10 April 1943 had formed as a result of the concentrating of major forces on the line Ponyri--Kursk and the march offensive by our troops from this line in the general direction of Dmitriyev-Lgovskiy, Sevsk, Seredina-Buda and Zhikhov.

Subsequent offense showed that the enemy expected the development of our powerful strike against Konotop, Romny, Mirgorod, in the rear of its entire southern grouping. In the aim of halting our offensive and thereby preventing the threat hanging over all the troops in the south, the enemy began to hurriedly shift major forces from the Western and Kalinin Fronts to the Central Front....

2. As of 10 April 1943, opposite the troops of the Central Front were formations from the German 2d Tank Army and 2d Army in the following grouping....

As a total there were over 18 divisions in the first line in front of the Central Front.

...As a total in the second line, in the reserve and approaching were up to 19 divisions of which up to 13 were infantry divisions (2 Hungarian, 1 Italian,

1 Spanish), up to 2 motorized divisions, 3 tank divisions and 1 cavalry division.

3. The highest density in enemy personnel and reinforcements continues to remain in front of the 65th Army (more than 7 divisions in the first line). The main bulk of the reserves is in the region of Lokot, Trubchevsk, Novgorod-Severskiy and Seredina-Buda (up to 8 divisions). All these enemy forces are concentrated not for active operations but rather for passive ones in the aim of preventing an offensive by our troops in the axis of: Sevsk, Krolevets, Konotop, Romny.

The regrouping of the troops and the concentrating of the necessary enemy men and weapons on the probable sectors of the offensive have been made difficult by the spring mud and the spring flooding.

From this it must be assumed that for the muddy season the enemy will remain in the existing grouping and after the end of it will begin to regroup the men and weapons for active operations.

4. The aim and most probable sectors for the enemy offensive in the 1943 spring-summer season is:

a) Considering the presence of the resources and most importantly the results of the offensive operations in 1941-1942, in the 1943 spring-summer period one may expect an enemy offensive only on the Kursk-Voronezh operational sector. An enemy offensive is scarcely possible on the other sectors.

With the existing overall strategic situation in this stage of the war, for the Germans it would be advantageous to firmly hold on to the Crimea, Donets Basin and the Ukraine. For this it is essential to move up the front line to a line of Shterovka, Starobelsk, Rovenki, Liski, Voronezh, Livny, Novosil. For carrying out this task, the enemy will require at least 60 infantry divisions with the appropriate air, tank and artillery reinforcements. The enemy can concentrate such a number of men and weapons on the given sector.

Hence, the Kursk-Voronezh operational sector assumes prime significance.

b) Proceeding from these operational considerations, one must expect the directions of the main enemy efforts to be simultaneously along the internal and external radiuses of actions:

1) Along the inner radius from the region of Orel via Kromy to Kursk and from the region of Belgorod via Oboyan to Kursk;

2) Along the external radius, from the region of Orel via Livny to Kastornoye and from the region of Belgorod via St. Oskol to Kastornoye.

c) In the absence of opposing measures by us to this enemy plan, its successful operations on these sectors could lead to the defeat of the troops of the Central and Voronezh Fronts and to the enemy's capturing of the major main rail line of Orel, Kursk, Kharkov and would bring its troops to an advantageous line ensuring the firm holding of the Crimea, the Donets Basin and the Ukraine.

d) The enemy can commence the regrouping and concentrating of its troops in the probable sectors for the offensive as well as to create the necessary supplies after the end of the spring muddy season and flooding. Consequently, one can expect the enemy to go over to a decisive offensive approximately in the second half of May 1943.

5. Under the conditions of the given operational situation, I consider it advisable to adopt the following measures:

a) By the joint efforts of the troops of the Western, Bryansk and Central Fronts, to destroy the Orel enemy grouping and thereby deprive the enemy of a possibility of attacking from the region of Orel via Livny to Kastornoye and to capture the most important and essential main rail line for us--Mtsensk, Orel, Kursk and deprive the enemy of the possibility of utilizing the Bryansk rail and road junction;

b) For checking the enemy's offensive actions it is essential to reinforce the troops of the Central and Voronezh Fronts with aviation, chiefly fighter, and antitank artillery with at least 10 regiments per front;

c) It would be desirable to have strong Hq SHC reserves in the regions of Livny, Kastornoye, Liski, Voronezh, Yelets.

Chief of Staff of the Central Front
Lt Gen Malinin

(TsAMO, folio 233, inv. 2307, file 3, sheets 29-33)

Document 5

FROM THE REPORT OF THE MILITARY COUNCIL OF THE VORONEZH FRONT TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF 12 APRIL 1943 ON ASSESSING THE ENEMY AND THE NATURE OF ITS POSSIBLE ACTIONS

Ahead of the Voronezh Front at present the following have been established:

1) Nine infantry divisions in the front line (26th, 68th, 323d, 75th, 255th, 57th, 332d, 167th and one division of unknown number). These divisions occupy a front of Krasno-Oktyabrskoye, Bol'shaya Chernetchina, Krasnopolye, Kazatskoye. The division of unknown number from prisoner information is to move up into the region of Soldatskoye and should replace the 332d Infantry Division.

These data are being verified. There are unverified data that in the second echelon there are six infantry divisions. Their position has not yet been established and these data are being verified....

2. There are a total of six tank divisions now ("Grosse Deutschland," "Adolf Hitler," "Toten Kopf," "Das Reich," the 6th and 11th) of which three divisions are in the first line and three divisions ("Grosse Deutschland," 6th and 11th) in the second line. According to the signals intelligence, the staff of the 17th Tank Division has moved from Alekseyevskoye to Tarnovka and this shows the

moving of the 17th Tank Division to the north. In terms of available forces, the enemy has an opportunity to move additionally into the area of Belgorod up to three tank divisions from the area of the Southwestern Front.

3. Thus, it must be expected that the enemy in front of the Voronezh Front can create an assault group up to ten tank divisions strong and with at least six infantry divisions, a total of up to 1,500 tanks, the concentrating of which must be expected in the area of Borisovka, Belgorod, Murom, Kazachya Lopan. This assault group can be supported by aviation numbering up to approximately 500 bombers and at least 300 fighters.

The intentions of the enemy are to make concentric attacks: from the region of Belgorod to the northeast and from the region of Orel to the southeast in order to encircle our troops which are to the west of the Belgorod, Kursk line.

Subsequently, we must expect an enemy strike to the southwest into the flank and rear of the Southwestern Front in order to then operate in a northerly direction.

However, it is not to be excluded that this year the enemy will abandon the plan for an offensive to the southeast and will carry out another plan, namely: after concentric strikes from the region of Belgorod and Orel it will set an offensive to the northeast for outflanking Moscow.

This possibility must be considered and the corresponding reserves readied.

Thus, in front of the Voronezh Front the enemy most probably will make the main thrust from the region of Borisovka, Belgorod in the direction of Staryy Oskol and with a portion of the forces toward Oboyan, Kursk. Auxiliary strikes must be expected in the areas of Volchansk, Novyy Oskol and Sudzhe, Oboyan, Kursk.

The enemy is not yet prepared for a major offensive. The beginning of the offensive must be expected not earlier than 20 April 1943, and most probably during the first days of May.

However, secondary attacks can be expected at any time. For this reason, our troops must show constant and highest readiness.

Fedorov

Nikitin

Fedotov

Korzhenevich

(TsAMO, folio 203, inv. 2777, file 75, sheets 116-121)

Document 6

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC OF 21 APRIL 1943 TO THE COMMANDER OF THE CENTRAL FRONT

As a result of the moving up of your troops during the period of the winter operations of 1942-1943, the demands of the Hq SHC directive of 15 October 1942 on establishing a front zone to a depth of 25 km which would prevent the residence and access for the civilian population in a number of fronts have been violated.

Not all the commanders of the fronts have promptly taken measures to create a new frontline area corresponding to the changed situation on the front.

Hq SHC orders:

1. To restore the frontline zone...and by 10 May 1943 to complete moving to the rear the entire civilian population within 25 km from the presently occupied front line, including from Maloarkhangelsk, Ponyri, Korenevo, Dmitriyev-Lgovskiy and Lgov.

The rear boundary of the frontline area for the Central Front should be established along the line: Gryaznoye, Vyazovatoye, Vaskovo, Voynovo, Topki, Khmelevaya, Lukovets, Groyainovo, Nizh. Smorodnoye, Gorki, Khlynino, Mikhaylovka, Krupets, Kuznetsovka, Arbuzovo, Shustovo, Sherekino, Yekaterinovka, Pogrebki--all points for the frontline zone inclusively.

2. In the frontline zone to immediately begin building two or three troop defensive lines, one behind the other, and to adapt all population points for the defensive in this zone.

The towns and large population points in the frontline zone from which the entire civilian population has been moved out should be adapted for the defense, regardless of their distance from the front line....

3. The execution of the current directive is to begin immediately....

Hq SHC
I. Stalin
A. Vasilevskiy

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 12, sheets 413-414)

Document 7

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC OF 23 APRIL 1943
TO THE COMMANDER OF THE STEPPE MILITARY DISTRICT

Hq SHC orders:

1. During the period of the manning up of the troops in the Steppe Military District, simultaneously with the tasks of combat training, the district troops are assigned the following tasks:

a) In the event the enemy goes over to an offensive before the district troops are ready, to bear in mind the secure coverage of the sectors:

- 1) Livny, Yelets, Ranenburg;
- 2) Shchigry, Kastornoye, Voronezh;
- 3) Valuyki, Alekseyevka, Liski;
- 4) Rovenki, Rossosh, Pavlovsk;
- 5) Starobelsk, Kantemirovka, Boguchar and the region of Chertkovo Millerovo.

The district commander, in accord with the grouping of the troops, is to organize a careful study by the commanders of the formations and units and by their staffs of these sectors and possible lines for deployment.

b) To take up, study and prepare for the defensive a line along the left bank of the Don River of Voyeykovo, Lebedyan, Zadonsk, Voronezh, Liski, Pavlovsk, Boguchar.

The line is to be ready by 15 June 1943.

c) To reconnoiter a defensive line along the line of Yefremov, Izmalkovo, Chernova, Borki, Izbishche, Repyevka, Alekseyevka, Rovenki, Belovodsk, Dyatkino Station, Kamensk to the Severskiy Donets River in the aim of determining the state of the defensive structures on it and the correctness of choosing this line in accord with the terrain conditions. Special attention is to be paid to the use of the commanding heights in the aim of creating the best conditions for observation and the fire plan.

2. The troops, staffs and commanders of the formations are to be readied chiefly for offensive combat and operations, for breaking through the enemy's defensive zone, as well as for making powerful counterstrikes by our troops, for rapidly digging in on the seized lines, for repelling enemy counterstrikes, for countering massed tank and air strikes and for nighttime operations.

Particular care is to be given to working out the questions of troop control and cooperation among the branches of troops in all stages of combat and the operation.

Serious attention is to be given to studying the reconnoitering of the enemy in two-sided exercises as this is aimed at discovering the defensive system and its grouping. The obligatory immediate participation in reconnoitering the enemy is to be demanded for all representatives of the staffs of all levels up to the army and front staff, inclusively, particularly in the major sectors.

Exercises with the staffs are to be carried out, as a rule, on a continuous and multiday basis, with communications and reconnaissance equipment.

The exercises with the troops from the battalion and higher are also to be carried out over several days, in working out a number of interrelated subjects and gradually bringing the conditions of the troop exercises and daily routine closer to combat reality.

The defensive combat and operation are to be worked out practically in the process of preparing the defensive lines. The questions of combating enemy tanks and aviation are to be worked on with particular care....

Hq SHC
I. Stalin
A. Vasilevskiy

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 12, sheets 426-428)

Document 8

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC OF 5 MAY 1943
TO THE COMMANDERS OF THE BRYANSK, CENTRAL, VORONEZH AND
SOUTHWESTERN FRONTS

In recent days, a significant movement of enemy troops and transport has been noted in the areas of Orel, Belgorod, Kharkov and the bringing up of troops to the front line. This forces us to expect active operations by the enemy in the near future.

Hq SHC draws your attention to the necessity:

1. Of fully carrying out the plan for use of frontal [tactical] aviation for destroying enemy aviation and interdicting the operation of the railroads and dirt roads....
2. Maximum attention is to be paid to all types of reconnaissance in order to discover the enemy grouping and its intentions. During these times without fail it is essential to take prisoners daily, particularly in the most important sectors of the front.
3. You must recheck the state of your defenses, the vigilance of security and the readiness of all men and weapons, including the troop, army and front reserves, to meet the enemy strike being prepared. Each hour must be used for strengthening the defenses. Check the organization personally and also through the responsible representatives of your staff.

A. Vasilevskiy
Antonov

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheets 30-31)

Document 9

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC OF 8 MAY 1943
TO THE COMMANDER OF THE STEPPE MILITARY DISTRICT

Hq SHC orders:

1. The 27th Army (without the 126th Rifle Brigade) is to be moved into the region of Yelets, Izmalkovo, Livny, Dolgorukovo with the task of securely covering the Yelets rail junction and the rail line section of Yelets, Bolgorukovo, having prepared a defensive line approximately along the line of Izmalkovo, Livny and the Kshen River.

To be ready to make a counterstrike from the region of Livny in the direction of Maloarkhangelsk and Shchigry.

The army is to be reinforced by one tank brigade and one line tank regiment and these are to be sent by rail to Yelets Station.

The 126th Rifle Brigade is to remain on the spot, in being put under the command of the 52d Army which is arriving in this region.

2. The 53d Army is to securely cover the railroad junction of Kastornoye and the rail line section of Dolgorukovo, Gorshechnoye, having prepared a defense along the Kshen River.

To be ready to make a counterstrike from the region of Kastornoye toward Kursk and Oboyan.

The army is to be reinforced by two line tank regiments which are being sent by rail to Kastornoye Station.

3. The 5th Guards Army is to be moved into the region of St. Oskol, Yastrebovka, Bol. Khopen, Chernyanka with the task of securely covering the rail section of Gorshechnoye, St. Oskol, Chernyanka, having prepared a defense approximately along a line of Yastrebovka, Istobnoye, Belyy Kolodez. The three below-strength rifle divisions are permitted to remain on the line of St. Oskol, Chernyanka. To be ready to make a counterstrike from the region of St. Oskol in the directions of Oboyan and Belgorod.

4. The regrouping of the armies is to be completed by 15 May, in carrying it out by a march, with the exception of the 155th Rifle Division which is to be moved by rail to Stanovaya Station and Telegino Station (near Yelets).

The move is to start on the evening of 9 May and to be carried out exclusively at nighttime.

Particular attention is to be paid to camouflaging.

Command groups are to be sent out immediately from the designated armies for reconnoitering the defensive lines and regions for the new troop positions....

for Hq SHC
A. Vasilevskiy
Antonov

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheets 40-42)

Document 10

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC OF 8 MAY 1943 TO THE COMMANDERS OF THE BRYANSK, CENTRAL, VORONEZH AND SOUTHWESTERN FRONTS⁴

According to certain data, the enemy can go over to an offensive on 10-12 May on the Orel-Kursk or Belgorod-Oboyan sectors, or on both sectors simultaneously.

Hq SHC orders by the morning of 10 May to have all troops both in the first defensive line as well as the reserves fully ready to meet the possible enemy

strike. Particular attention is to be given to the readiness of our aviation so that in the event of the enemy offensive it can not only repel the enemy air strikes but from the very first moment of its active operations win air supremacy....

Hq SHC
I. Stalin
A. Vasilevskiy

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheet 44)

Document 11

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC OF 10 MAY 1943
TO THE COMMANDERS OF THE WESTERN, BRYANSK, CENTRAL,
VORONEZH AND SOUTHWESTERN FRONTS ON THE ORGANIZING OF THE FIRE PLAN

The enemy which has prepared an offensive is endeavoring, as experience has shown, to first detect our fire plan, and in particular the weapons positions, by offensive actions on individual areas of the front conducted several days prior to the basic offensive in order with the start of the final offensive to neutralize the detected firing points and batteries.

In order to protect the fire plan organized by us until the crucial moment, it is essential to assign a portion of the infantry and artillery weapons to repel these enemy reconnaissance offensive actions.

The assigned weapons should fire from alternate positions, after which they should move covertly to other alternate or basic positions depending upon the situation....

A. Vasilevskiy
Antonov

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheet 62)

Document 12

DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC OF 20 MAY 1943
TO COMMANDERS OF WESTERN, BRYANSK, CENTRAL, VORONEZH,
SOUTHWESTERN AND SOUTHERN FRONTS⁵

According to information received from covert intelligence, the Germans intend to begin the offensive on our front during the period of 19-26 May.

I order: Not to lessen vigilance and combat readiness of the troops; to keep the aviation in full readiness. By reconnaissance and the capturing of prisoners to discover the enemy grouping and its actual intentions.

I. Stalin

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheet 74)

Document 13

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC OF 2 JULY 1943
TO THE COMMANDERS OF THE WESTERN, BRYANSK, CENTRAL
VORONEZH, SOUTHWESTERN AND SOUTHERN FRONTS

According to existing information, the Germans can go over to an offensive on our front during the period of 3-6 July.

Hq SHC orders:

1. To intensify reconnaissance and observation of the enemy in the aim of promptly discovering its intentions.
2. The troops and aviation are to be ready to repel a possible enemy strike....

Hq SHC
I. Stalin
A. Vasilevskiy

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheet 156)

Document 14

COMBAT ORDER FROM COMMANDER OF VORONEZH FRONT
OF 2 JULY 1943 TO ARMY AND CORPS COMMANDERS⁶

There are data that the enemy can go over to the offensive during the period of 3-6 July 1943.

I order:

1. To increase vigilance of troops and their readiness.
2. By capturing prisoners and increasing observation and air reconnaissance, to promptly detect the enemy's intentions and grouping.
3. Report on measures taken.

Vatutin Khrushchev Ivanov

(TsAMO, folio 203, inv. 2777, file 85, sheet 285)

Document 15

COMBAT ORDER FROM COMMANDER OF CENTRAL FRONT
OF 2 JULY 1943 TO ARMY AND CORPS COMMANDERS

According to existing data, the enemy during the period of 3-6 July 1943 can go over to an offensive.

I order:

1. The troops and aviation of the front to be in constant readiness to repel the possible enemy strike.

2. To strengthen reconnaissance and observation of the enemy in the aim of promptly discovering its intentions.

In establishing indications of an enemy offensive or attack, to immediately commence counterpreparations in the aim of checking the enemy attack. Counterpreparations can involve all the artillery of the 13th, 70th and 48th Armies and all the aviation of the 16th Air Army according to the previously elaborated plans.

3. The military councils of the armies and the commanders of the IX and XIX Tank Corps are to immediately organize a check on the combat readiness of the troops and the readiness of all means of communications.

4. Report on the measures taken by 2200 hours of 2 July 1943.

Rokossovskiy Malinin Telegin

(TsAMO, folio 62, inv. 329, file 23, sheet 7)

Document 16

REPORT OF COMMANDER OF CENTRAL FRONT OF 2 JULY 1943
TO THE SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, MAR SU I. V. STALIN

Pursuant your instructions of 2 July 1943, I report the following: I have issued an order to bring the front's troops and aviation to full combat readiness, and also to intensify reconnaissance and observation of the enemy in the aim of detecting its preparatory measures and intentions.

In the event of an enemy offensive on the Orel-Livny, Orel-Kursk and Kromy-Kursk sectors, I will carry out counterbombardment in the aim of checking the enemy offensive.

Involved in the counterbombardment will be all artillery from the 48th, 13th and 70th Armies and all aviation from the 16th Air Army according to the previously elaborated plan.

The inspecting of the combat readiness of the troops and all command and communications equipment has been entrusted by me to the military councils of the armies and the commanders of the separate corps during the period up to 2100 hours on 2 July.

Commander of Central Front
Gen Army Rokossovskiy

Member of Front Military Council
Maj Gen Telegin

Chief of Staff
Lt Gen Malinin

(TsAMO, folio 62, inv. 329, file 23, sheet 8)

Document 17

INFORMATION FROM GENERAL STAFF OF 5 JULY 1943
(0150 HOURS)

TO COMMANDERS OF WESTERN, BRYANSK, CENTRAL, VORONEZH,
SOUTHWESTERN AND SOUTHERN FRONTS ON THE FINAL DATE OF THE ENEMY OFFENSIVE

As of 1600 hours on 4 July in the Voronezh Front, the enemy has undertaken along a broad front reconnaissance in force up to four battalions supported by 20-25 tanks, artillery and aviation up to 150 sorties. All enemy attempts to drive into our forward edge have been driven off.

On the Voronezh Front, a prisoner from the 168th Infantry Division captured on 4 July and on the Central Front defectors who also crossed over on 4 July indicated that the troops had been issued a daily ration and vodka and that on 5 July 1943 the enemy should go over to the offensive.

During 4 July, up to 300 aircraft were concentrated at the Kharkov airfield.

Antonov

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheet 158)

Document 18

FROM DIRECTIVE OF Hq SHC OF 9 JULY 1943
TO COMMANDER OF STEPPE MILITARY DISTRICT ON RENAMING THE DISTRICT
AS A FRONT

Hq SHC orders:

1. As of 2400 hours on 9 July, the Steppe Military District is to be renamed the Steppe Front.
2. The Steppe Front is to include the 27th Army with the IV Guards Tank Corps, the 53d Army with the I Mechanized Corps, the 47th Army with the III Guards Mechanized Corps, the 4th Guards Army with the III Guards Tank Corps, the 52d Army, the III, V and VII Guards Cavalry Corps, the 5th Air Army, all reinforcement units and rear units and facilities of the Steppe Military District.
3. The armies of the front are to be deployed according to the verbal instructions issued by the General Staff.
4. The troops are to move only at night.
5. The command post of the Steppe Front as of 12 July will be in the area of Goryainovo....

Hq SHC
I. Stalin
Antonov

(TsAMO, folio 3, inv. 11556, file 13, sheet 160)

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ This report was published fully in the book: "Kurskaya bitva" [The Kursk Battle], Moscow, Nauka, 1970, pp 470-471.
- ² [Not in text]
- ³ [Not in text]
- ⁴ A directive of analogous content was issued to the commander of the Steppe Military District.
- ⁵ A copy of this document was forwarded to the commander of the Steppe Military District.
- ⁶ A copy of this document was forwarded to the chief of the General Staff.

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